

The Deserter

by Christian Lanciai (2008)

The characters:

Germund, the father
Arthur, his brother^[LSEP]
Gertrude, his wife^[LSEP]
Wilhelm, his second brother, Jesuit^[LSEP]
Aldo, his older son^[LSEP]
Bruno, his younger son^[LSEP]
Marlene, his betrothed
Eugenio Pacelli, later pope Pius XII
Bishop Clemens August von Galen, later cardinal
Iwo^[LSEP]
Max^[LSEP]
Kurt^[LSEP]
Wolf^[LSEP]
Urzel^[LSEP]
Jochen, bar guest^[LSEP]
three Gestapo policemen
Aaron^[LSEP]
Benjamin^[LSEP]
other Jews of the Warsaw ghetto
Karl Goerdeler, mayor of Leipzig
the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman^[LSEP]
Raoul Wallenberg^[LSEP]
Martin, prisoner

The action is in Germany, Poland and Russia 1939-49.

Dedicated to the memory of Wilhelm Köster, S.J. and Hubert Ewert.

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The Deserter

Act I, scene 1. A family dinner.

father (clings his glass, rising) Let me not importune in the good mood, but just allow me to contribute to its cheerful note by wishing our lovely new engaged couple all happiness in the world with all my heart.

Bruno Father, are you about to start giving me warnings again?

Aldo Let him talk, Bruno. He only means well.

father Yes, Bruno, warn you and all of us against everything except your engagement, which is the only ray of light I can find in life at the moment.

Uncle Arthur Are you painting the devil on the wall now again, brother?

father The devil is not on the wall, Arthur, and God forbid that he ever enters our walls, but he is outside, Arthur, and waiting for us, and he will tempt us out of here to take care of us. The more reason for me to rise in all my melancholy and pain, Bruno, to the more implore you to safeguard and take care of your engagement and love. You have maybe found the perfect partner to fulfil your life with, you can't imagine how happy we are because of this, none of us could anything but love Marlene almost as much as you must do yourself, but at the same time we have to be realistic, and I must urge you, Bruno, and all of you to be careful and guard your hearts' treasures well and never risk them by compromising with a possibly constantly harder force of reality. We are just ordinary people, and that is perhaps our fortune, when we observe what happened to some of our best friends, who were taken away, forced to ruin or into exile just because they were more than just ordinary Germans.

Arthur Get to the point, brother.

Father We all suffer from Hitler, all Germany and Austria suffer from Hitler, even if most of us aren't yet aware of it, since most of us are credulous and still wish to believe that he will lead us on by the good ways of fortune, although all signs indicate the contrary. We all welcomed him during the humiliating years of the inflation after the degrading peace of Versailles, which none of us ordinary Germans deserved, since we neither started the world war, wanted it or deserved it. We welcomed Hitler as a promising change at last from the constantly deeper degradation of the years of hardship, while everything now seems to point at his desire to start another world war at any cost, as if the one we already had was not enough.

Aldo What will we do if there will be war, father?

Father That's just the point I wished to reach. We have no choice. If the war comes we will not be able to avoid it. Then you must both take part in it, my sons, but you will manage as long as you never lose your souls by compromise.

You now have your Marlene to live for, Bruno, and you must never step down from what she means to you. And Aldo, you have your humanism, your idealism, your culture and music as a teacher, which you must never abandon even if you end up by the most horrible war fronts of all.

Aldo Are we still able to avoid the war, father?

Father You see what Hitler has done already. Rhineland, Sudetenland, Munich, Austria, Danzig. As I see it, he is already since some years beyond any chance of any point of return. He can't stop. He is like a possessed gambler who just has to go on playing since he so far only has won, and then he must inevitably in the end lose everything. Gambling is never profitable. The only possible profit in life is the careful prudence of honesty in the sign of the one-sidedness of constructive moderation in contentedness: to be satisfied with little and live in peace with what's enough without inflicting on others.

Aldo So we will have to join the war?

Father (sighs) We have to serve our country, since we are Germans, and follow Hitler wherever he will lead us, as long as he is leading us. That's the only choice we have. Prosit, Bruno and Marlene. May you survive all the follies of Hitler. *(raises his glass)*

Bruno Prosit, father.

Aldo (raises his glass) You are right, father, and there is no other example for us to follow than yours.

(All drink to Germund with appreciation and to each other.)

Marlene (rising) May I answer?

(All immediately fall silent and prepare to listen to her)

Marlene Father, I have been accepted like a sister in your family, which to me has been like at last finding and receiving the family I always missed. This has been something of the first moment of happiness in my life, and it has been perfect from the start. If there is anything I believe myself able of contributing to this family happiness and community, it is, as you say, to safeguard and never have it compromised. I will never let go of Bruno even in my thoughts. I belong to you with all my soul and heart, my new beloved family, where Bruno is my saviour and knight in shining armour. All my faith, piety and affection belong to you, and I thank you and Bruno for what you already have done for me and for allowing me to be one of you. *(sits down. All are moved. Bruno presses her hand. There is a small moment of silence.)*

Wilhelm (takes advantage of it and rises) My friends, I am afraid that Germund isn't quite aware of how right he is. We cannot mobilize enough preparations for the probable trials ahead. I was in the war and had to experience all its worst horrors since I didn't have to be a fighting soldier. My task became instead to serve as priest in prisons, hospitals and trenches to receive the summaries of all the lost

lives of the dying and doomed. I fear that we will have to go through all that again. All the horrendous confessions and insights I received in the hopeless experiences of only ruined lives of lost and perishing souls can never be communicated or given any idea of, and my obligation of silence as a Jesuit fortunately saves me from even trying to understand what a war means to humanity, its brutalization and destruction of souls and lives for no use or purpose at all but only to the damage of all. As a priest you can be a pacifist and still partake in the war and remain passive without being criminal and still remain constructive, which is my privilege. And if the past war gave me any good experience at all, it was the awareness of the unquenchable in man, that always makes him carry on in spite of everything, keeping his optimism and idealism and simply never being able to succumb whatever happens. This is what we have to live for and safeguard in our family, as Germund says. And perhaps you are lucky to have a priest in the family, even if he is a Jesuit, who always can remain detached from the war and still give you all his indefatigably consistent support and fullest compassion whatever happens.

Aldo I almost regret that I didn't become a Jesuit like you, uncle Wilhelm.

Arthur You were always the most sensible one in the family, for which we are grateful. What would we have done without your example, little brother?

Gertrude We would not be an intact family, for without the spiritual basis with its infallible moral and reliable stability we would be like helpless reeds to the storms of the world.

Germund Thank you, Wilhelm, for existing and standing up for us and Germany.

Arthur Let's now at last resume our celebrations of the freshly engaged and the party! That's after all why we are here, to celebrate and be merry. Forget all damned politics, which only exist to make a nuisance for all of us ordinary people!

Aldo It's just in the way for humanity.

Bruno (rising) Let me finally get back to the point of father's lecturing, which is nothing less than a hearty welcoming of my one and only becoming bride, Marlene. If you never want to let me go, I will even less ever let you go. *(raises his glass to her)*

Aldo Cheers for Marlene!

All Cheers for Marlene!

(All rise to Marlene, who alone remains seated. The party reaches its height.)

Scene 2. Three priests converge.

Wilhelm Are you worried, Eugenio?

Eugenio Am I worried? Of course I am. That's why I have come here to confer with you. What do you say, excellency? How do you assess the situation?

August It is very serious.

Wilhelm In what way?

August In every way. We may expect anything, and still I fear that only what we never could have expected will befall us.

Wilhelm You speak like an unfathomable oracle.

Eugenio Regrettably I fear that our bishop is right.

August Still hardly any of us could assess the international situation better than you, brother Eugenio. You have always kept the entire world catholic diplomacy in your hand.

Eugenio Don't exaggerate. Nothing is more precarious for a diplomat than to correctly comprehend a political situation, and the political currents have never been more difficult to get a proper view of in history than today.

August Still you could be regarded as the leader of the politics of the world's greatest community.

Eugenio The Catholic church has never been more powerless, and its diplomatic course has never been more precarious. What I lack most of all is an assessment of your position and situation here in Germany concerning the issue of the Jews.

August What do you want to know?

Eugenio Will your fuhrer realize his threat against the Hebrews?

August Don't call him *our* fuhrer. No sensible man in Germany wants any connection with him.

Wilhelm I am afraid the issue is important above all theologically.

Eugenio Yes, it is very important and the more important because of Hitler's very worrying attitude.

August Why not pose the question straight, Eugenio? What will we do as leaders of the church if the war comes?

Eugenio The question is unfortunately no longer *if* it comes, August. We can no longer avert it and have never been able to, since Herr Hitler from the beginning has been firmly bent on carrying through a war of revenge at any cost. At least that has always been my conclusion.

August We still have no war.

Wilhelm Even if there is still broad daylight, August, the night will come.

August You have given up then? You take the war for granted although it isn't here?

Eugenio We try to be realistic, August. These are my most important questions to you. What will you do, August, when the war comes? If Germany makes war, will you then be loyal to Germany and give it your support morally as one of the foremost church leaders of your country, or will you turn against the power of the state which by making war proves itself in the wrong?

August I can give you a fairly direct answer, Eugenio. If Germany makes war I will have to detach myself from Germany, and I always dreamt of getting a good reason for starting a resistance movement against the accursed Nazi party.

Eugenio And what about you, Wilhelm?

Wilhelm I am a Jesuit. I will never take any stand except for man. I am first of all a humanist. Like Stefan Zweig I will never take any position in politics for or against any state.

August And what about you yourself, Eugenio? Where will you stand in relationship with Germany, if Germany starts a war?

Eugenio I am first of all a diplomat and in that capacity barred from taking any position, but Wilhelm's position is closest to my own. I will do anything to protect man and all human values including all basic human rights against all war and all politics that try to infringe on the rights of humanity.

August That's the only thing war and politics will ever do.

Eugenio And what about your position in the Jewish issue?

August The crystal night obliges every sensible human being to principally take a stand for the Jews against all Nazi brutality.

Wilhelm All Jews who were able to have left Germany, so there are not many left, and they have not been much persecuted since. Personally I advise all Jews I get into touch with to leave Germany in time before there will be a war.

Eugenio And if there will be a war and the Jews will suffer the more for it? Can you defend them against your own countrymen?

August To a limited extent against abuse by the authorities. If Germany would launch some general national persecution against the Jews, no one would be able to defend the Germans and least of all themselves. Wilhelm is right in his position. And what about you?

Eugenio Fortunately these problems don't exist in Italy, although we suffer from Mussolini. But since I am engaged in Germany I wish to keep myself as well informed and updated as possible on the current situation. I want to know as much as possible about what is going on to better be able to assess the situation from my prison in the Vatican to at all be able to do anything.

August If there will be war, the risk is that Mussolini as a dictator will join it on Hitler's side.

Eugenio I am aware of the risk of such a horrible possibility. But, if this could be of any comfort to you, if there really will be war, which I as a political

realistic diplomat unfortunately have to regard as unavoidable, it must at the same time mean the end of both Hitler and Mussolini and hopefully for all dictators taking part in it. War is always self-destructive, especially for dictators.

August Yes, that is really the best comfort you could give us as Germans. Thanks for coming to comfort us, Eugenio. We will keep you informed.

Eugenio That's all I want from you.

August The one who is likely to best be able to inform us is you, Wilhelm, who still remain closest to earth as an ordinary Jesuit and foot soldier in the universal Christian crusade, while both I and Eugenio are limited by our positions.

Wilhelm I am aware of this and of my responsibility for that matter.

Eugenio That's why you are the most important of us, Wilhelm. You are best qualified to keep up with present developments of the situation. Both August and I will have too much responsibilities on our hands to be able to do any more than defend our own positions and that of the church.

August Yes.

Wilhelm Although your responsibility is greater, you give me an even greater responsibility.

August No priest is equal to a true Jesuit.

Eugenio Be our doctor, if the church starts bleeding, Wilhelm.

Wilhelm The most important thing is that none of us will fail whatever happens and especially if the worst happens.

Eugenio What is the worst that could happen?

Wilhelm That Hitler will get his war to make his power even more absolute to be able to execute all his threats against us Catholics, against the Jews and against the world.

Eugenio And unfortunately most things indicate that that's exactly what will happen.

August So let's keep ready and prepared. Thanks for our talk, Eugenio, and for coming here.

Eugenio I am to thank you for having given me this conversation.

Scene 3. A scene of intimacy.

Bruno My love, we shall never know when the doomsday bell will strike, but everyone seems to be certain that it will strike.

Marlene There have never been such strange times as these. I don't think history has ever seemed so unreal to us people. It is as if humanity had lost touch with reality and because of that, we throw ourselves blindly into the arms of a mad sleepwalker like Hitler, who is only good at faltering and yelling in

hysterical nonsense. I can't understand how any German at all could stand his anti-musical voice.

Bruno Aldo says that the antimusic and unmusic has drowned and smothered music. That's why we don't hear composers like Mahler, Richard Strauss and Sibelius any more.

Marlene Mahler was a Jew. Richard Strauss has been removed because he stood up for his partly Jewish family and Stefan Zweig. Sibelius has ceased composing.

Bruno That's what I mean. He heard the unmusic of the age and fell silent. Even in America the only serious jazz music has stopped.

Marlene Cole Porter?^[SEP]

Bruno No, George Gershwin.^[SEP]

Marlene Also he was a Jew and didn't even live in Germany.

Bruno What will become of us, Marlene? Are we doomed for happening to live in Germany?

Marlene We are all doomed but not just for living in Germany. We are doomed because we live, and it's the age that drags us down into perdition. Perhaps there will be another age after the coming war and after the death of its tyrants, perhaps a small respite of peace giving humanity a chance to catch his breath to then again commit himself to throwing himself down into his eternal incurable vicious circle of self-destructive wars of revenge and vendettas.

Bruno Still we are not entire wrong, Marlene. There can't be any worse dictatorship than Russia of the Bolsheviks, that replace all human and natural rights with an inhuman ant society where the soul and all spiritual endeavour is excluded and banned. Only Hitler is prepared to resist and struggle with it.

Marlene All depends on how he will do it. There is a possibility that he might make it if he applies any reasonable fair play, but he is entirely out of style. He is a vegetarian and chaste and extreme in his purity of living, if he had wanted he could have been an ideal paragon of virtue and clarity, the kind of prophet that Nietzsche tried to promote, but he is too aggressive, and the risk is that he will throw the world into a world war by aggression and attack, and in that case he is more lost and done for with all Germany than anyone else.

Bruno Stalin is not so stupid that he would attack Europe although he desires Poland and the Baltic states. Unfortunately Hitler is then more stupid.

Marlene Love will overcome all wars. We must make love, Bruno. It's our duty to humanity. Love is a greater power than any violence, therefore it must be allowed to live and work, so that it can overrule the unmusic of war and violence by real music. We must not tolerate the perversion of humanity by the baseness of violence, and only we who keep on loving could turn it in the opposite direction.

Bruno Wilhelm Furtwängler and Richard Strauss will not desert Germany for having been ravished by dictatorship and violence and being swept into the gutter.

Marlene They will not let go of their music, like we must not let go of our love.

Bruno And that will be our doom and condemnation. Uncle Wilhelm foresees a new world war that must be worse than the last one which already reached the ultimate level of endurable horrors. He knows what he is talking about. We must stick to him.

Marlene Perhaps there is time for us to love before there is a war. Love is the right means of spiting any war. Love will prevail and overcome it.

Bruno We can survive, Marlene, whatever happens.

Marlene And we can love, whatever happens. So let's do it.

Bruno Your invitation cannot be refused.

Marlene It's the invitation of love forever, like the eternal life always will defeat the constant death and destruction of history.

Bruno Let's kill the war by our love before it begins.

Marlene Yes. Come, Bruno. Enter me and stay there with all your love.

(They make love.)

Scene 4. The secret cafe of the socialists.

Iwo Welcome, Aldo. Have you awakened at last?

Aldo No, but I am beginning to wake up.

Iwo (to his comrades) Aldo is one of us. I have known him all my life. I vouch for him. We can all trust him. He is a humanist.

Max What is he doing here?

Iwo Ask him.

Max What are you doing here, Aldo?

Aldo Looking for someone.

Max Who?

Aldo Someone to trust.

Max With what? Have you been cheated? Has your sweetheart sacked you?

Aldo It's worse than that.

Iwo What has happened, Aldo?

Aldo Nothing has happened. That's the problem.

Kurt You don't mean to say that you have seen through the establishment?

Aldo On the contrary. I don't give a damn about it.

Wolf Welcome to the socialists. Here we are all beyond the law. None of

us has any right to live. We can only exist underground, and we only live for seeing the establishment one day disintegrate and disappear.

Aldo I have come to you in search of the opposition that this country is wanting.

Iwo Welcome. They are all here. They are everywhere but dare not show themselves,

Wolf For they know, that if they dare to present the least kind of criticism against the party and the state they will end up in concentration camps together with Jews and gipsies.

Kurt You have come to the right place, Aldo, if what you need is outlawed exile. Here we are all raped by society. But we only show ourselves to each other. Officially we don't exist but are only ordinary loyal uncritical Germans who follow blindly the suicidal mass infallibly led by the party and the fuhrer directly down to hell.

Aldo I am just a humanist who is only really looking for freedom. That's what we lack above ground.

Max It doesn't exist in Germany.

Urzel It only exists abroad and in any country but Germany. Even the Soviet Union has more to offer in that way than Germany.

Wolf Even Italy. There you are still allowed to remain a Jew although at the risk of your life.

Aldo I don't think I quite agree with what you said about the Soviet Union, Urzel. I always regarded the only good thing about Hitler his uncompromising hostility against the Bolsheviks.

Urzel What's wrong about the Bolsheviks? Aren't they humans like us?

Aldo Yes, but the system is not human. It is as inhuman as Nazism. Socialism is good and works but only theoretically as an idealism. The Soviet Union and Germany are the two monster examples of how socialism has derailed and turned into its own contrary when it was politically established.

Iwo Aldo is right. We must live for our idealism to one day be able to dispose of the dictatorship of both socialism and Nazism. Europe must be cleansed from all dictatorships whatever they call themselves, for they are all just fascisms.

Kurt Welcome to our gang, Aldo. Naturally we can only work underground and in secret.

Aldo That's why I came here. I knew that your group would be clinically free from informers.

Max We all know each other. We all have different ideologies and only that in common, that we are against the establishment, which is always wrong.

Aldo So all that matters is subversion?

Max And we never give in.

Kurt We are chameleons. In order to survive we adapt even to the Nazis.

Aldo I am with you on everything except violence.

Iwo So are we.

Wolf Then there is the question what to do about the army. Shall we allow ourselves to be made soldiers and desert from the beginning and thereby risk our lives even more than as soldiers?

Max It's up to each one personally.

Urzel I will never take part in any war except as a nurse.

Iwo You don't have to, Urzel. You are a woman.

Urzel I mean ideologically. If you can't ideologically stand up for Hitler's advancing war, you all have to desert from the beginning.

Max Those who can will do so. Those who can't will do it in time.

Wolf It all depends on where we are being sent.

Iwo Does anyone know where Hitler will strike first?

Kurt Poland.

Wolf Poland stands no chance. A war against Poland will be a short war. It's what will follow next that will be the serious war, when France and England will stand by Poland.

Max That's when we will have a world war.

Iwo That's why Hitler will be an idiot if he attacks Poland, and still that's his intention.

Kurt He will manage as long as he keeps in league with Russia.

Iwo I am afraid that's what he is counting on. As long as Russia let's him have Poland, he can also deal with France and England.

Urzel I just heard today that Ribbentrop has concluded a pact of non-aggression with the Soviet Union, which means that Russia gives him a free hand with Poland, which means that war is a fact. France and England will never tolerate it.

Iwo Stalin lets Hitler into Poland in order to himself be able to grab eastern Poland.

Kurt We still haven't come far off from the 18th century.

Iwo What will you do, Aldo? Enlist as a soldier or go underground from the beginning?

Aldo That's why I am here. I have to join up as a soldier. I see no way of avoiding it except by jeopardizing the lives of my entire family, and my brother has just married. We talked about it in the family. We have to join up. But we will need alternatives to be able to get off when the time comes.

Iwo You have us here.

Urzel We will never compromise. We will never give in until the Nazi

regime is brought down and the entire party scrapped.

Aldo I believe you, Urzel. You are unrealistic but convincing. You will never give in.

Urzel I believe that only the Soviet Union could beat Germany. Both France and England will fall before the Soviet Union.

Max So your hope is for the Soviet Union?

Urzel Yes. It's our only chance.

Max I must prefer England and don't think it will ever be vanquished. It holds the entire world. Germany only has the continent and is limited. Not even Napoleon could overcome the fact that Britain controls the seas.

Wolf I hope you are right.

Aldo I think we will have a future after Germany has fallen, but that fall will take long and be extremely hard and painful.

Iwo That's the downfall and future we have to live for.

Kurt Welcome to the White Rose, Aldo. That's what we unofficially have started to call ourselves.

Max Many priests are with us.

Aldo I know. That's how I knew I came to the right place. My own uncle is a Jesuit and has confidentially suggested you as a possible way for Germany to get out of the crisis.

Max Is he the one who knows the pope?

Aldo Yes, he is the one who knows the pope.

Iwo Welcome, Aldo, to those who will bring down the dominant Nazi order. With the pope and your uncle and bishop von Galen behind us we cannot fail.

Aldo I only want to do what is right. That's the only reason for my being here.

Iwo I know, Aldo. That's why we all here are totally against the establishment.

Max All we need to do is to get organized and survive.

Aldo It will take years of egregious efforts, I am afraid.

Urzel We are prepared. We never give in.

Aldo I believe in you, Urzel. You are the maddest and most extremely unrealistic and consistent in your totally unilateral idealism. You can't lose.

Urzel I know, Aldo.

Act II scene 1. The Vatican.

Galen Thanks for your invitation and for allowing me to come, your Holiness.

Pacelli You understand of course why I wanted to see you?

Galen Of course. Germany and the world are maybe facing their most

difficult crisis ever.

Pacelli No cardinal wants to be a pope, but they say that it's always the right pope that is chosen who by fortune always happens to be the right pope for his age. By chance perhaps the foremost of all who know Germany well within the Vatican has been elected pope just as Germany intends to launch a world war. You could regard it as God's foresight, as mere chance or as the power of destiny or as a pure coincidence, but under the circumstances I think it is fortuitous that I happened to be elected pope.

Galen The question is what you can do about the situation.

Pacelli The only certain thing is that we cannot do anything about Germany. It is being led by a madman, I said so from the beginning, and that madman will constantly go from bad to worse as long as he is allowed to go on. The only thing we can do about it is to take cover. First of all we have to think of the protection of the church. I think we can manage the Catholic Church through the crisis without difficulty, since it is used through the centuries to always have to go through crises. A world political crisis could in fact only strengthen it morally and ethically. The Jewish issue is worse. There I am at a loss even as a pope. I can do nothing else but preach peace and tolerance and reconciliation to the deafest ears in the world, that's Hitler and Stalin, and I am afraid it will seem pretty weak and naïve if not even awkward. But that's all I can do.

Galen How far do you think Hitler will go?

Pacelli He will go at any length as long as he is allowed to. He is more mad about power than both Nero and Caligula. He lives only for his power. He will never stop for anything, until he is stopped by others.

Galen Could you have any influence with Mussolini to influence Hitler?

Pacelli No. I can get Mussolini's attention and make him listen to me, but that is all. I don't have his will to cooperate. What I can do is all I can to protect the Jews of Italy against the dangers of the Hitler-Mussolini pact. I don't think the Jews of Italy have anything to fear. But naturally I worry about the situation in Germany. What could *You* do, bishop von Galen?

Galen We have never been more powerless in Germany against her bolting downhill race, we ordinary Germans and spiritual leaders, who all are at risk of being targeted and persecuted. I actually think that no priest in Germany will be able to avoid it, for we are all on the same side against the insanity. Like yourself we have to chiefly concentrate on taking cover and protecting our own. I can defend the church by insisting on its position out of all politics, and I believe all protestants and Catholics can be saved. What I don't know is whatever we could do to protect the Hebrews.

Pacelli That's the nightmare we are facing. Hitler has already in the 20s published his intention to try to cleanse Germany from all Jews, and he is mad

enough to try to implement such an insane scheme. Nothing less can stop him than an assassination. Of course we could save individual Jews and help them escape when they are subject to persecution, but we will never be able to do enough. Whatever we do, my dear bishop, the future will accuse us of not having done enough.

Galen The more important then that we do even what little we can do with the more power and force and effort.

Pacelli Exactly. It will be a difficult time and probably the hardest trial and test that Christianity ever faced. Everything will be turned upside down, and I regret to have to admit that I believe that the only chance for the democratic world order to survive would be if England and America crushed Germany. If Stalin would do so it would only make matters even worse.

Galen I am afraid so too.

Pacelli Let's constantly keep in as close contact with each other as possible, my bishop. You are my main pillar of support in Germany. I know that I can rely on you as perhaps the only one, and I know that you if anyone could take on the role of a leader of the opposition in Germany against its dictatorship. It will be more difficult for you than for me, for I have no opposition in Italy. I have nothing to fear but must nonetheless first of all think of the protection of the church. You on the other hand have everything to fear of the overwhelming inhumanity of Germany and will hardly even be able to protect yourself, but my prayers will always be with you.

Galen I have already started developing a network among opponents in Germany. There are very promising circles of youths who are prepared to go at any length and even try assassination attempts against Hitler, and there are high militaries that would support them.

Pacelli Violence is always wrong.

Galen Of course, but if a dictator is stupid enough to provoke violence, it's his own fault.

Pacelli We both serve God and humanity. Let's continue doing so above all and concentrate on the survival of God and humanity. If God does not survive, if the church and the Jews are ruined, neither will then humanity be able to survive. Our responsibility as the world's leading men of God is therefore absolute.

Galen And we will live up to that responsibility, won't we, Eugenio?

Pacelli How is our friend Wilhelm Köster?

Galen He will manage. He has his own network and operates completely close to the ground and under it. He serves God by only serving man directly in close contact.

Pacelli I envy him.

Galen So do I.
Pacelli He is allowed to work as a true priest while we have to consider our position and responsibility.
Galen Farewell, your holiness.
Pacelli I hope we shall meet again.
Galen I hope we will both see an end to the coming war.
Pacelli I sincerely hope so too, and not just us, but an entire humanity and without such bitter disillusionings as we had after the last war.
Galen Let's wish each other the best of luck.
Pacelli We sincerely need it.
(They embrace and depart.)

Scene 2. A café. The resistance group is assembled.

Aldo Thanks for coming, Bruno.
Bruno Marlene didn't want to come along.
Aldo I understand her. She wouldn't have been at ease here.
Bruno What is going on?
Aldo I didn't want you to miss this. It could be a historical momentum. I wanted you to hear what was being said.
Bruno Is that your Urzel, that wild young lady?
Aldo Yes. I love her. Here is Wolf. Meet Wolf, Bruno.
Wolf Aldo's orderly brother. I am honoured.
Bruno I am afraid I am not better than my brother in the least.
Wolf You have a sweetheart who doesn't appear in public and whom you have married.
Bruno What does that Urzel really want?
Wolf That's the question. She is like a female Peter Verkhovensky, but she has promised to speak out tonight, and everyone has great expectations.
Aldo Especially I.
Max (further inside) Get up on the table, Urzel, so that everyone will see you!
Aldo Whatever she says now, Bruno, please don't be shocked.
Bruno I understand why you love her.
Urzel Take it easy, comrades! Don't push me!
(mounts the table) Comrades! This is it! If our fuhrer starts a new world war, which is his downright intention, it will first of all be a declaration of war against us and against the entire German people! Therefore it is our duty to bring him down! By any means! If he starts a war there will be licence for any violence let

loose across the entire world, especially as a reaction against him, his party and his government!

Wolf (calls) What do you want instead? Communism? Stalin? Bolshevik dictatorship?

Urzel (calmer) We are first of all humanists and have something to defend. We have our ideals like tolerance and freedom of thought, freedom of religion and conscience. The only acceptable society is a society that does not exclude anything human. As it is, more and more are excluded from the established society, not just Jews and gypsies, not just Catholics and dissenters, but everyone who sticks to universal tolerance and peace, all pacifists and socialists, all defenders of the right of freedom for the soul and spirit! We have seen more and more humanists disappear, all our best authors, like Stefan Zweig, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Bertolt Brecht and Erich Maria Remarque have been forced into exile, while we humanists who remain are constantly being trampled down and discriminated. The establishment doesn't care one bit any longer for the individual, and when the natural and self-evident rights of the individual are being overrun, ignored and violated, the right of existence of humanity is at risk. That's the cruel facts we are facing. Therefore we must bring down the establishment by any means.

Aldo (calling) How?

Several How? How? How?

Urzel By any means. We must get contacts abroad and develop them. We must form underground groups all over Germany. We must undermine society by sabotage and propaganda by pamphlets. We must have a working underground press. And when the war comes, it will be our signal that we must never back down from assassination attempts.

Wolf How certain is it that the war will come?

Urzel Unfortunately more than 99 per cent.

(A booming noise gradually starting and increasing alarmingly is being heard. All start listening in silence.)

Wilhelm (enters, discreetly to Bruno) I see that Marlene didn't want to follow you here. She is wise.

Bruno What is going on, uncle?

Wilhelm You can hear for yourselves.

Aldo What is it we are hearing, uncle?

Wilhelm It's the war. In this moment Luftwaffe is flying on direct orders from the fuhrer without any declaration of war to annihilate Poland.

Wolf Then we are done for.

Kurt Did you hear, Urzel?

Urzel You can all hear it, and it has been confirmed. The political leaders of our country have started war against the world. That means war against us. We have to defend ourselves, and we must prevail. And to reach our victory, any means are allowed.

Wilhelm Do you allow her to appear and speak thus openly? There might be Gestapo agents and informers present.

Iwo Not this early in the morning. Not this late at night. We have been careful about choosing the hour of our meeting.

Kurt Without wishing to, we managed to synchronize it exactly with the break out of war.

Aldo She is not afraid, uncle.

Wilhelm No, I can see as much. The safest person in the world is also the one who is most afraid, and that is the pope.

Urzel We must join with all enemies of the state! Hitler has made all anarchists and terrorists our friends! All contacts are good contacts, except with the state!

Kurt We are with you, *Urzel*!

Aldo Everyone is joining up with her, uncle, not just me. Even the SS would love her.

Wilhelm I am afraid you are right.

Scene 3. A bar.

Jochen You are drunk, Arthur. Get home to bed.

Arthur Of course I am drunk. What else would I be? What else can you be? That's all that's left for you to do - to get drunk. We have no chance. It's just to go down and be an alcoholic. And you'll at least make the best of it.

Jochen Go home, Arthur. You are only making it worse.

Arthur Can you make it worse? No, I make it better in the only possible way - by drinking. Forget the world, for it is going to perdition.

Jochen Here is your brother coming to collect you.

Germund (enters) There you are, Arthur. It's time to go home.

Arthur It's time for all of us to call it off. The world is going to ruin, *Germund*, and I am trying to celebrate the occasion.

Jochen He is drunk.

Germund That is obvious enough. How long has he been here?

Jochen All day.

Arthur And night. I will stick here to my bottle until I die.

Germund Come now, Arthur, before you get thrown out.

Arthur I will never get thrown out. No, we will all get thrown out, we Germans, from the world order. We have no chance, Germund.

Germund That's not your problem. Come home now.

Arthur The fuhrer will lead us all to hell, that's what he always did, and he will not let go until he has gone to hell himself.

Germund At least keep your voice down, Arthur.

Jochen Arthur has never been discreet. Nothing could ever silence him.

Arthur There you are, brother. I can never keep quiet, and thanks gods for that! I am the only one in all Germany who dares to denounce Hitler!

Germund Shut up, Arthur.

Jochen He is only drunk. Who does not talk too much under the influence? Who doesn't suddenly grow honest by the releasing liberation of the bottle?

Arthur We have no chance, Germund. We will all perish. Your sons are both in the resistance and have become socialists. They will all be taken by the Gestapo! And their girls! Only Marlene is sound and keeps away and refuses to have anything to do with the German hysteria. But Aldo's wench is the worse, total revolutionary, nihilist and communist! And she will drag us all down into the swamp of persecution, where we will all be torn asunder by the methods of interrogation by the Gestapo, which will scrap us and turn us into waste for the SS to dispose of!

Germund Don't talk nonsense now, Arthur.

Arthur I am not talking nonsense! I see things as they are! We have no chance! All Germany will perish with Hitler, and we will all go down with her! That's the simple truth!

Germund Shut your bloody mouth!!

Jochen The risk is that he is right.

Arthur Only brother Wilhelm has any chance to make it, who has taken refuge in total alienation by escaping into celibacy as a Jesuit, the supreme method of estrangement. If Marlene is wise she will follow his example and also make it alone unlike all the rest of us.

Germund Come on now, Arthur. Gertrude is waiting for us at home at dinner. You haven't eaten all day.

Arthur No, for I have been drinking all day instead, to forget the hunger and need and the destruction of Germany. We have no chance, Germund. We did stand a chance as long as Hitler didn't start any war. Now we have no chance any more. The world and the great powers will annihilate us. They will bomb all Germany to cinders. It will be much worse than the previous world war.

Germund Come on now.

Jochen Let him talk. Let him display our splendid future. You do get fed up with Hitler's one-sided visions of our thousand years of glory.

Arthur Hitler does not know what he is talking about. He is worse than Napoleon. Napoleon was at least a colonel, but Hitler is only a corporal. He is incompetent as a soldier. He can neither march nor hold a gun or even ride. The Poles could at least resist us with a decent cavalry!

Jochen Let him get drunk enough to perhaps be able to get lost before the Gestapo comes to take him away.

Arthur We will not get away. Gestapo will come and take us all, because we see through the lies of Hitler and are aware of the universal destruction he is leading us all down into. There will neither be time enough to get drunk enough or to get away.

Germund Help me get him up, Jochen. I think I can get him home if I hold him under the arms.

Jochen Can I help you?

Germund No, I can manage him alone. I am used to it. I have helped him to get home from the pub since we were young.

Jochen Has he always been like that?

Germund I could always drink and never had too much. He could never drink and always had too much. Our talents were unequally distributed from the start.

Jochen I will help you to get him home.

Arthur I need no help. I can manage. I can perish all by myself.

Germund No, you can't, Arthur. You will need someone to help you even with that.

Arthur You always saved me, little brother. But you can't save us from Gestapo, least of all me, for I always tell the truth.

Germund Come on now, Arthur. You need some sleep.

(They get him out of the pub.)

Scene 4. A dark café somewhere in Warsaw.

Aldo (shabbily dressed as a civilian) and Bruno (in soldier's uniform).

Aldo I had to do it, Bruno. We had no right to take Poland. We have no business here. Every Pole is as good as every German, and we have no right to impose our rule on them. Urzel was wanted by the Gestapo, and she had to vanish underground. She has joined the Polish partisans, and so will I. Perhaps we could at length atone for something of the German crimes against Poland. How is Marlene?

Bruno I have to stay on, Aldo, for her and for the family's sake. Because of your desertion, it's the more important that I remain loyal. I will follow the

German army as far as possible. That's the only way for me to protect the family after your demission.

Aldo Of course. Has the Gestapo troubled you? How is uncle Arthur?

Bruno Father has been interrogated. That is all. He stands above suspicion and is clinically clean, since he never had anything to do with the socialists, the opposition or the White Rose. He is no more compromised than uncle Wilhelm is by being a Jesuit. Uncle Arthur is unhappy and just keeps on drinking and speaks his mind without any reservations, but no one can take his constant drivel seriously. They try to keep him at home, but he escapes to his bar at every possible instant.

Aldo And Marlene? How is she? Is she left in peace?

Bruno Her integrity is intact. No one can harm her.

Aldo Stay in the army, Bruno, for the sake of the family. I had no choice but had to desert for the sake of Urzel, but the more important it is for you to remain. Deny all contact with me. I don't exist. Forget me, until the war is over and Germany has fallen.

Bruno You think it has to fall? You think we have to lose?

Aldo We have to lose. That Hitler would prevail is unthinkable. That would mean the end of democracy and the world and the definite victory of the terror of evil. You can't imagine what we have seen here in Poland. You can't imagine the calculated and methodical cruelty and evil with which they treat the Jews.

Bruno I heard rumours. So they are true.

Aldo They are just echoes and vague shadows of a reality the cruelty of which is inconceivable.

Bruno It's the fault of the war, which can turn anyone into a monster.

Aldo Yes. That's why I deserted.

Bruno And you demand that I stay on?

Aldo As far as possible. Try to endure. I had finally no other choice. If you finally have to get off, do so only if you have no other choice.

Bruno We'll meet again after the war, Aldo, if we survive.

Aldo If anyone survives, Bruno, we shall also survive. Give them my best greetings at home. Hug them for me, if you will see them again. You realize of course that I can have no contact with them.

Bruno Aldo, you are our leading star. Sooner or later I will also desert.

Aldo Don't look forward to it. Only if it is safe and you have no other choice.

Bruno I promise.

(Aldo passionately embraces Bruno and then immediately departs.)

Bruno (alone) Sooner or later we will all dream of deserting.

Act III scene 1. The Gestapo.

1 We wish you no harm, Miss.

Marlene Why then have you brought me here, if you wish me no harm?

1 We just want to know one thing and another.

Marlene Tell me then what you want to know, and then let me go.

2 We shall be delighted. We want to know everything about your brother-in-law and his whereabouts.

Marlene Unfortunately I don't know anything about that. He is lost. It was you who sent him to the eastern front.

3 You surely must know more than we. He had connections with the socialists. His friend, a certain Ursula Morgenstern, made herself prominent in the underground opposition. She has vanished also. Are you sure you don't know anything about where they are? After all, they are your closest of kin.

Marlene Aldo has disappeared in Poland. According to certain sources, he has been reported fallen and dead, just because he has vanished without a trace. It's your war, not ours. You are responsible for him, not I and not his family. It's your duty to find him, not ours.

2 We understand you perfectly well, Miss. But you have to know something. Both your husband and his brother had friends among certain underground circles of oppositionists. Are you positive you have no contacts there yourself?

Marlene I never had any interest in politics. I never wanted to join such meetings nor even watch them as an observer.

3 That commends you. Then you have been wise enough to avoid getting involved. You must know that we have questioned your father-in-law, though.

Marlene He knows as little and is as innocent as I, his brothers and his wife.

3 Yes. That was also our conclusion after the interrogation. We don't believe though that your brother-in-law has fallen. We have reasons to presume that he together with Ursula Morgenstern simply absconded to join the Polish resistance movement.

Marlene I don't know anything about that.

2 We believe you, Miss Marlene. We must ask you to cooperate with us, though. You are the one in your family who as closest to Bruno most probably will learn anything about Aldo and Urzel and their friends. We must urge you to keep us informed.

Marlene You know more than we do.

2 Perhaps for the moment. But you will probably learn more than we, since Bruno is not likely to desert you. Unlike his brother, he is a dutiful German

soldier and very faithful to his family, whom he would never let down, in contrast to his brother, who might very well have deserted you all to become a traitor. We find it realistic to regard that possibility as most probable. But Bruno would never fail you, and sooner or later you will have news of him. We must therefore ask you to keep us informed.

Marlene We never learn anything about what is happening on the eastern front.

3 You will learn sooner or later. Surely Bruno must keep in touch with you?

Marlene His letters take time to reach me, and they are being censored.

1 Of course.

2 One more thing, Miss Marlene. You are a very beautiful woman.

Marlene What does that have to do with it?

2 You are a very attractive woman. That could make our cooperation easier.

Marlene What are you asking of me?

2 Only your good will of cooperation. If you cooperate we can guarantee that nothing will happen to your parents-in-law or anyone in your family.

Marlene Is that a threat?

3 Fritz means, that if he may fuck you, your entire family will be at perfect safety.

Marlene (controls herself) And if not?

2 If you don't want to cooperate, Miss Marlene, we cannot ensure the safety of anyone in your family. In view of your brother-in-law's subversive contacts, your cooperation is recommended.

Marlene Extortion, in other words.

3 Yes.

Marlene I know you. I guess I have no choice.

3 No, you have no choice. But our guarantee is absolute.

Marlene I must make a condition.

2 We will listen to your suggestion.

Marlene I am willing to sacrifice myself for my family, if it ensures their safety. But only on the condition that they must never learn about it.

1 *(to the others)* That's reasonable.

2 Then it's agreed. You will stay here tonight and may return home tomorrow unharmed.

Marlene We are just a family of teachers and humanists. We have never been politically interested. We have never taken a stand for or against the party. We have our innocence to defend, and I will only accommodate you for the preservation of that innocence, which means more to us than any carnal circumstance, which has no bearing whatsoever in comparison, just for your information.

- 1 She is philosophic.
2 Better still. She is moral.
3 We will be entirely satisfied with you, Miss, on your own terms, and we shall make sure that all your comforts tonight will be perfect, so that our cooperation may last as long as possible and proceed with the least pains possible.
2 Follow us, Miss. (*leads her out.*)

Scene 2. In church.

Wilhelm I think they will stick to their word. They will just be in control of us. They think they can control our souls by controlling our bodies, but they deceive themselves. You have acted wisely, Marlene, and your sacrifice is heroic.

Marlene No one will ever know about it but you.

Wilhelm Of course. I am the perfect confessor. I never betray a secret, least of all if it is human.

Marlene How do you think they will do? Do you know anything? It is long since I had a letter from Bruno now.

Wilhelm The eastern front is getting stuck. It is stretched too far, and the risk is that it will break just for being too much spread out. Neither Charles XII nor Napoleon went into Russia on such a broad front as Hitler, and still they both went under.

Marlene Do you mean that Hitler's defeat in the east is a certainty?

Wilhelm It doesn't look any better, Marlene. I will go to the eastern front myself to take care of our soldiers, the few of them that I will meet, and I fear that I will only meet with sufferings and miseries of no end. Already in 1917 that front was considerably more humanly disastrous than the western front. The difference was, that we learned about conditions in the west, but we never learned the truth about the east.

Marlene It seems to be the same story all over again.

Wilhelm Yes, but worse.

Marlene What do you think about Aldo and Urzel?

Wilhelm They have probably deserted, as the Gestapo has assumed, and then we will never see them again until the war is over, and even less we will hear from them. Urzel was a sharp young lady who although totally without fear never took any risks. She disappeared as soon as the Gestapo learned about the existence of the White Rose. She has without any doubt joined the Polish resistance like also Aldo.

Marlene And Bruno?

Wilhelm He will certainly be back. My greatest hope is to find him somewhere on the eastern front. I will try to find him.

Marlene You will probably succeed.

Wilhelm I think so too.

Marlene Good luck, father. When will we see you again?

Wilhelm God willing, before the war is over, and while we are all still alive.

Marlene You are the one holding the family together.

Wilhelm With your help, and Bruno's. He will never let go of us.

Marlene Thanks for existing, father.

Wilhelm Marlene, if you would ever get into trouble with the Gestapo, I mean, if they would ever go too far, a word from you is enough, and we will save you.

Marlene And if I break it up with them? What will then happen to Germund, Gertrude and Arthur? I can't cease giving them the protection which my cooperation actually provides.

Wilhelm But how long will it last? Stay in touch, Marlene, whatever happens, and I will keep in close contact with you, by my friends if not by myself.

Marlene Do so, father. Keep your protective hand over us.

Wilhelm It's we who sacrifice ourselves for humanity who thereby also save humanity.

Marlene That's our privilege, father.

Wilhelm Yes, Marlene, view it from the bright side, and you will evade all evil. Go now. You have no sins to be forgiven.

Marlene Thanks, father. *(leaves the confessional)*

Wilhelm (remains with his face in his hand, concealing that he is crying) My tears are dry, for I have seen and heard too many confessions of the same kind. Because of my eyes being cried out long ago, the more copiously the unstoppable floods of the soul gush forth from the eternal despair of compassion with all innocents who never will cease to suffer and bleed to death for the crimes of humanity against humanity. *(dries his eye and collects himself.)*

Scene 3. Stalingrad.

Bruno, worn and torn, emaciated and exhausted by sleeplessness, writes a letter in a miserable corner with the war raging all around.

Bruno "Beloved Marlene, I don't know how things will turn out. The battle here of Stalingrad just keeps going on and never ends. We are stuck, while the Russians keep overwhelming us in constantly new attacks, as if they volunteered as food for cannons. No one is deserting any more, since there is nowhere to go, while the Russians are deserting in thousands and still only keep constantly

increasing in number. This must be the most terrible battle ever fought, and it has only started. The risk is that this hell will turn into a defeat, and in that case, what will be next? Will we all be taken prisoners, or will we manage to retire? Of what I have heard about Russian prison camps, even death would be better, and I will never allow myself to be taken alive. If the worst disaster scenario will turn out and we actually lose Stalingrad, I really hope we will be able to retire, but it looks bad.

I know nothing about you. I don't even know if my letters reach you. The only certain thing is that I at least constantly have you in my thoughts, and I will never let you go. Every night in the darkness you are my light, every moment of rest I think only of you and enjoy our memories and the brief moments of intimacy that love gave us, which is the only thing that keeps me alive. I swore eternal faith to you which I will never compromise with as long as I live, and I know that you in the same way belong to me. About my brother and his girl I know nothing. He disappeared in Poland, and she is vanished also.

At best, if there will be a defeat, which appears more obvious every day, a retreat might imply that I might soon come home after all. I am still no war invalid, my only pains in the war so far have only been some ordeals of dysentery, but that's normal and happens to everybody, so fortunately I have kept my health even if my waist constantly has decreased. There is still hope, my love. I will write again as soon as I can.

Give my affectionate hugs to father and mother and uncle Arthur. I have heard that uncle Wilhelm has arrived at the eastern front but I don't know where.

Your one and only infinitely loving,
Bruno."

(takes up his letter between the sentences, dries some tears, sniffles, writes on and continues like that until the letter is finished.)

Scene 4. At home.

Gertrude Don't drink any more, Arthur.

Arthur We are done for, Gertrude. We have lost the war. It will be the same nightmare all over again like twenty-five years ago. We will be humiliated and driven over and reduced to constant misery like starving paupers for decades ahead! Germany will never be able to rise again after this defeat! We are lost!

Germund Try then at least to lower your voice, Arthur. The whole house is listening.

Arthur Do we have anything to hide? Of what good is that? What's the use of whispering about Stalingrad when everyone knows about it anyway? When whispered about, its meaning only grows the more terrible than if you speak about it openly. What have we to lose? We have already lost everything and will lose even more! By these bombings, that only have begun, there will only be smoking ruins left of all Germany if even that, when the war is over!

Gertrude (pleading) Please, Arthur, try to spare us and tune down!

Arthur What good will that do? If you postpone the truth and reality, it will only get worse! Try not to repress the fact that we are lost! Then it will only hurt the more.

Germund We are not lost, Arthur. We are never lost. We must never give up. We are humanists. We must not lose our faith in man. We still have our culture, which keeps us alive, and which it is our duty to carry on through all wars and crises and disasters to future generations in the hope that they might have a better world than ours. Even if we end up as ruins, there is the hope that next generation might build them up again.

Arthur You are so blue-eyed, Germund. Can't you see what is going on? The dictatorship is breaking us down piece by piece and stealing our souls and our lives to gradually kill the last of us in the heart and the soul! Can't you see what has happened to Marlene? Even she is already a ruin!

Gertrude Don't say anything bad about Marlene.

Arthur She is cooperating with the Gestapo! She has sold her body to them to save us!

Germund For God's sake, Arthur, don't cry out that to the entire world!

Arthur The whole block knows about it. Let the entire world know about it. Your son is a deserter and has blown from the army and turned a traitor and joined God knows what wild partisans, and he has been damned right in doing so! And therefore the Gestapo has got a hold on us and taken Marlene's body for a pawn to leave us innocents in peace. That's how the government and dictatorship works, and it will only get worse as long as it is still there.

Gertrude How could it be worse? What's missing in our destruction, except that our house not yet been bombed to rubble?

Arthur Just wait. It will come. All connected with the opposition are interned and will share the lot of the Jews to be reduced to soap in Auschwitz, and when all millions of the opposition have been extirpated they will go on to take care of their relatives and friends. Those who govern us are no real people. They are the worst terror paranoia in history incarnated in the sickest maniac the world has ever seen and whom we ourselves made our dictator.

Germund Stop it now, Arthur. Do whatever you like, go and drown yourself in the bottle, but leave us alone.

Arthur At last you said something sensible. Where have you hidden my bottle?

Gertrude (tired) In the big flower pot, Arthur.

Germund Get out and get drunk, if you want, as long as you shut up.

Arthur *In vino veritas.* The truth will never shut up and must never shut up but only grows the more evident and loud by the releasing effects of wine to the soul liberating it from all damned mortality. *(leaves)*

Gertrude Is it really true what he says about Marlene?

Germund I am afraid so. You see how she has changed. She is never happy any more. She says nothing, but Arthur might have noticed what she is concealing.

Gertrude (in despair) What have we done to deserve this? What has Germany done to deserve all its innocents to be afflicted?

Germund (hugging her tenderly) Nothing, Gertrude. We are perfectly innocent, and that innocence we are still capable of defending. And no one is more innocent than Marlene, whatever she has done.

Gertrude Will we ever see our sons again?

Germund No one can answer that question. We must leave it to hope and the future. Our only comfort is that at least we have had no report of anyone of them missing or being lost. Wilhelm has promised to try to find them. *(embraces Gertrude, who is crying)* All wars have reached an end, Gertrude, like there never has been any storm or bad weather without sunshine afterwards.

Gertrude But victims are victims, Germund, and they can never be forgotten or forgiven.

Germund We have not been victims yet.

Gertrude Yes, Germund, Marlene is already a victim.

Act IV scene 1. A café in the Warsaw ghetto.

Aldo We are among friends here, Urzel. Here everyone is as exposed and homeless as we.

Urzel But they are too dull and passive. They do nothing but just hang around waiting to die. That's what I can't accept among the Jews. They accept the godless treatment they are being subject to. They walk like inane sheep to their concentration camps to allow themselves to be disposed of there without any protests. As long they don't make any resistance, the Germans will go on exterminating them.

Aaron What can we do?

Urzel You have to make rebellion!

Aaron By force?

Urzel Yes, by force! How do you think the Germans are conquering the world? By friendly persuasion and white flags of pacifism? You must at last start fighting back!

Benjamin We have been smuggling weapons to the ghetto for half a year already. We are waiting for someone to raise the banner of insurrection.

Urzel It's about time. Does someone have to do it for you? Can't you do it yourselves?

Benjamin We tried in January but it was not successful.

Urzel Success! Do you expect people to applaud when you fire a cork gun that can't sound convincing enough to frighten a German? Are you so afraid of the Germans that you are afraid of scaring them? Retaliate at last by an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth! Use their own guns against them! Do to them what they are doing to you! Kill them without further questions!

Aaron I almost think she is right. I think it's about time. If we don't start making a resistance they will take the last of us and send to Auschwitz. We have to start defending the few of us that are left.

Urzel Don't you see that the war is turning? Haven't you heard that the Germans have been defeated by the Russians at Stalingrad and that they are driving them back? Don't you see that the time is ripe to crush the entire third reich to crumbs so that a dictatorship never will be able to rise again from the ruins?

Benjamin I think she knows what she is talking about.

Aldo We could synchronize a rebellion here in the ghetto against the Germans with a Polish uprising downtown. The Poles are also just waiting for the signal.

Aaron No. They are waiting for the arrival of the Russians.

Aldo They may have to wait for long.

Aaron (to other friends) What do you say, comrades? Is it time at last to start fighting back against our torturers and executioners?

A Jew It has been so for long. We don't need a woman to inform us about what needs to be done.

Urzel That's what I mean. Do it then! Get going! Put an end to the inhuman bully society of cruel insensitive authorities once and for all!

Aldo (can't believe his eyes) Wilhelm!

Wilhelm Aldo! At last I have found you. I couldn't believe my eyes at first.

Aldo What are you doing here?

Wilhelm I was just about to ask you the same. I usually make a visit to the ghetto when I am in Warsaw. I am on my way back to Berlin from the eastern front.

Aldo How are they at home?

Wilhelm Everyone is well, but Marlene needs her Bruno.

Aldo And how is Bruno? Have you seen him?

Wilhelm I don't know where he is. He is one the hundred thousand that were lost at Stalingrad. The Russians took a hundred thousand prisoners of which most of them already appear to have died of cold and hard treatment.

Aldo So the defeat at Stalingrad was actually total?

Wilhelm As total as a defeat can be. The world war tide has turned. The Germans are retiring on all fronts, not just from Stalingrad but also from Moscow and in North Africa.

Urzel (to others around) Did you hear? Germany is losing the war!

Wilhelm But the leadership in Berlin is not giving up. Rudolf Hess tried to accomplish a separate peace with Great Britain by escaping there personally, but the British refused. The war will go on until Germany is brought down to nothing and all Europe will be in ruins.

Urzel They should have shot Hitler from the start. He should have been executed already in the 20s.

Wilhelm It's too late now. The damage he has caused the entire world can never be repaired.

Aldo So you know nothing about Bruno?

Wilhelm No one knows anything. No one knows whether he lives or is lost.

Bruno (has entered unnoticeably, unrecognizable as a soldier veteran marked by the war)
Yes, I know someone who knows.

Aldo Talk, stranger. What do you know? Who are you?

Bruno Aldo, I am not surprised that you don't recognize me.

Aldo (gets it) Bruno! *(flies up and hugs him immediately warmly for long)* You are alive!

Bruno Yes, but it's not much of a life.

Urzel (when Aldo at last starts to let him go) You are unrecognizable, Bruno.

Bruno I know. *(turning immediately to his uncle)* Uncle, how is Marlene?

Wilhelm She needs you. I see that you are still a soldier. Are you on your way to Berlin?

Bruno Yes.

Wilhelm So am I.

Bruno Are they all well?

Wilhelm As well as could be. Berlin has been exposed to heavy bombings. They live and are well and have managed but look like ghosts, like most people do more and more in Germany. It brings me infinite joy that you have managed. Are you on leave?

Bruno Yes, uncle, I am on leave, short leave, but still. I have a week. Then I must return to the eastern front. I am still a soldier, Aldo. I didn't find it necessary to desert, and I can still defend my family.

Aldo That sounds almost like a reproach.

Bruno It's no reproach against you. It's just a matter of fact. I just mean, Aldo, that you don't have to worry about me and the family getting into trouble for your sake. As long as I am a soldier, we can still all manage.

Urzel That's great, Bruno. Go home and take care of the innocent. We will take care of the Germans and Warsaw and the ghetto here and are the right people to give the Germans hell. We shall war against them worse than all Russians and Americans in the world. A rebellion from the heart of their own empire is the very last thing they are expecting.

Bruno You seem to have got through all perils so far.

Aldo Urzel knows what she is doing. She has a reputation of being hard, that is immune against gunfire.

Bruno In that case I can just hope that it will work. But be careful. Take no risks.

Aldo Urzel never takes any risks.

Urzel I am a German myself and know the German mentality better than the Germans do themselves. I know where to hit them hard. When we are finished with them there will not be a single Nazi left in all Germany.

Bruno Still they are only just socialists, like yourself once upon a time, Urzel.

Urzel National socialists are not the same as human socialists.

Bruno Do you still trust the Bolsheviks?

Urzel They will cleanse all eastern Europe from Nazis. What they will do after that with eastern Europe is another issue.

Bruno I hope we will all live to see it.

Wilhelm Come, Bruno. Will you take the train? You ought to have plenty to tell me about Stalingrad.

Bruno You too, uncle, from your side of the eastern front.

Aldo If not before we'll meet again after the war.

Bruno We'll probably see each other again before that, Aldo. I will be back in Warsaw.

Aldo If it still exists when you are back.

Bruno No one will be likely to alter its position.

Aldo I am considering the German destruction of it. If we make rebellion in the ghetto and the Poles in the city, the Germans will not be likely to leave much left of the city.

Urzel Whatever the Germans will do with us and the Poles and the Jews, we will do the same with them.

Bruno Good luck, Aldo and Urzel. Unfortunately I cannot help you.

Aldo You will help the family instead.

Bruno Someone has to.

Wilhelm Come, my son.

Bruno (to Aldo and Urzel) Farewell.

Aldo We will be seeing you.

(Bruno and Wilhelm leave)

What a strike of fortune! And that he would appear just now! It's a good omen for us!

Urzel Yes, it is. Now we must start organizing the rebellion. *(They immediately start conspiring with the comrades in the café.)*

Scene 2. A secret meeting.

Wilhelm This is Karl Goerdeler, Bruno, the only political hope of Germany.

Goerdeler I am sorry about what has happened, Bruno.

Bruno Do you know anything about my wife?

Goerdeler Bruno, you are still in the army and have a perfect record as a soldier and minor officer. Postpone getting into touch with your family until the war is over.

Bruno What do you know?

Goerdeler (to Wilhelm) What does he know?

Wilhelm Only what everyone knows. The house was bombed, there is nothing left, and his entire family has disappeared, no one knows where. The only thing they know is that they probably have managed.

Goerdeler (ironically) They know it, - probably?

Wilhelm They have most probably all gone underground.

Goerdeler And you have no contact with them?

Wilhelm I have been at the eastern front the entire last year, and have not been in any touch with them the last months. We came home together, me and my nephew, and found our bombed family home and no trace of all those who had lived there, least of all of our own family. That's why we have turned to you. From certain other sources I have learned, that Marlene has been subject to extortion by the Gestapo.

Goerdeler Has the Gestapo had any hold on your family?

Bruno Only the fact that my brother deserted to abscond into Poland to probably join hands with Polish partisans together with his wife.

Goerdeler I understand. Was Marlene very beautiful?

Bruno Extremely.

Goerdeler They have probably tried to use her, therefore she has probably gone underground, and when your house was bombed your family found it unavoidable to do the same. I will gladly make some research for them, but it is probable that they will not appear again until the war is over or at least until Hitler and his dictatorship is gone. More and more are going underground. More and more are secretly joining the White Rose, the German opposition, who are regarded and treated as traitors without any examination or mercy. They want to bring down Hitler and his party by force. I have tried to make them be content with having Hitler brought to trial and condemned before he is executed. I suffered hard criticism for that. They want to remove the Nazi government by staging a coup. I want any procedure in that direction to be handled correctly by law in that case.

Bruno Will the party allow you to be at large?

Goerdeler So far. I am moderate and wish to stick to a middle way and the law. Because I stick to the law they can't touch me. But I have many dangerous contacts and do what I can to save the lives of refugees and Jews.

Bruno Do you think you could trace my folks? Just a sign of life, to let them know that I live? At least Marlene?

Goerdeler (sighs) I think I could trace your parents and uncle. Your Marlene is a different matter. I think the safest thing for her would be that no one tries to find her, so that she may stay in peace underground until there is peace again. We don't know what the Gestapo has done to her, but there are reasons to suspect the worst.

Bruno What would that be?

Goerdeler That they tried to make her an informer.

Bruno She never could be, least of all by force. She is not like that.

Wilhelm Bruno is right. I can confirm it. She has probably gone totally underground to stay there until the war is over, which would make it pointless for anyone to search for her.

Goerdeler We are then in perfect agreement, father.

Wilhelm (takes Bruno by the shoulder) There is nothing we can do, Bruno. We can just wait for the war to end and in the meantime carry on our heavy duties at the eastern front, you as a soldier, and I as a spiritual guide.

Bruno It is constantly getting more difficult to obey orders.

Wilhelm Do that as long as you can, for the sake of the family. Keep as untainted as possible as long as you can, for the sake of the family. That's all you can do.

Goerdeler Pater Köster is right, Bruno.

Bruno (sighs) Good. I will heed you. Back to the war, in other words.

Wilhelm That counts for both of us.

Bruno Is it true that you could have altered the destiny of Germany, mayor Goerdeler?

Goerdeler I should have been chancellor instead of Hitler. I should have been president after Hindenburg, if von Papen hadn't stopped me. If we had brought down and succeeded in dismantling Hitler before 1933, all Europe could have been saved.

Bruno Why has Hitler allowed you to carry on?

Goerdeler Because in contrast to him I always kept within the law. I had to keep within the protection of the law simply to survive, but I am aware that it will not be possible much longer now in wartime.

Wilhelm Thank you, mayor. You are still the only political hope of Germany.

Goerdeler We need more than just God's protection to manage the worst, which is still waiting for us, pater.

Wilhelm All righteous and good people are on our side with the pope at the head.

Goerdeler As I said, we need more than the pope and God to get through it.

(Wilhelm and Bruno leave.)

They couldn't even imagine. The resistance in Germany is at the greatest peril in the world, and if you go underground, which their entire family has done, it means you certainly are in it. If Bruno as an officer had any contact with them, he would immediately be court martialled and probably executed after as painful and prolonged torture as possible.

Scene 3.

An empty abandoned house with one grand piano and nothing else.

(Cautiously and with extreme discretion, a miserable man enters approaching it, with long hair and beard, a typical refugee who has lived on nothing perhaps for a year. When he has made quite sure that he is quite alone, he dares to sit down by the piano. He hesitantly tries a Chopin piece, like the study in E flat major opus 10 n. 3, searchingly but still with some certainty, and you hear that he is a real pianist who hasn't been practising for a long time, though. Before the middle section Bruno appears. The pianist becomes aware of him and breaks it off in terror.)

Pianist I haven't played for long.

Bruno But you still have it all inside you. You have the gift. That's enough. I often come here myself to play sometimes. It is so quiet here, as if the war didn't exist. Are you a refugee?

Pianist Yes.

Bruno Do you live here?

Pianist Yes.

Bruno You look all washed up, emaciated and reduced to nothing. How do you support yourself?

Pianist It's difficult.

Bruno I can well imagine. Are you a Jew?

Pianist Yes.

Bruno (angry) It's a shame how you have been treated. It will go down in history as our greatest dishonour. I could bring you some food, if you need.

Pianist Please, don't reveal me. I have been hiding since the Warsaw ghetto was liquidated. I am alone. My entire family has been erased.

Bruno You are not alone. I am also without family. Our home was bombed in Berlin, and all my kin have gone underground to evade the Gestapo. We were humanists. My brother is a deserter and has joined the Polish partisans.

Pianist Do you believe in a life after the war?

Bruno First the war must end. It hasn't ended yet, and unfortunately it will take some time.

Pianist Are there any Jews left out there?

Bruno My people have succeeded in exterminating two thirds of all Jews in Europe, but one third is still remaining, most of them in Italy, since the pope protects them.

Pianist Then there is hope. How long do you think we will have to live like this, like animals?

Bruno I will provide you with everything you need. Just remain concealed. We are retreating, and we can't hold Warsaw much longer. Your Polish brothers will soon come to liberate you with the Russians, who already stand outside Warsaw.

Pianist Is there anything left of Warsaw?

Bruno Very little. Most streets look like the desolate street outside with only ruins and rabble.

Pianist I was afraid so. Why did you do it?

Bruno There was no other reason except animal madness and the destructive urge of only one man, whom the greatest misfortune in the world brought to a very unfortunate position of power in our country, and he wasn't even a German. I put the same question to you. Why were we struck by this? We were a humanistic people who loved peace and culture most of all. Gangsters have exterminated all humanism in Europe, and it will never be able to wholly recover. Culture and humanism became the leading guidelines of Europe during the renaissance, which now has been buried in barbarity, and there is nothing else to blame but madness. Four hundred years' labour for civilization and justice is undone, and all we who worked for it have been violated and ravished by violence and injustice. Worst afflicted of all are you, who were the most

innocent. You really must wonder why the most innocent had to be the hardest hit, and in your case even a pianist. How long have you not been able to play?

Pianist More than a year.

Bruno May I ask, who you were?

Pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman.

Bruno Then I know who you are. You used to play in the Polish radio and have made recordings, most of Chopin but also of your own compositions.

Pianist Yes.

Bruno And you are reduced to this degraded state of a man. And it's only our fault. I am infinitely sorry and can't apologise enough, too well aware of that we never can be forgiven.

Pianist It's not your fault.

Bruno Yes, it is. It's only the fault of us Germans.

Pianist Would you like to play something yourself?

Bruno My fingers are also quite stiff.

(sits down by the piano and plays Beethoven, for instance the second movement of the Pathétique sonata.)

Pianist (when he has stopped) As long as music is allowed go on living, there is hope for humanity.

Bruno The tragedy is, that the real genuine music is too pure and noble to ever be able to override the false noise and din of unmusicality. It is being drowned, but in contrary to the noise it will survive, while the din of war always will pass by unnoticed, no matter how much noise it makes for absolutely nothing but only to the vain damage of all harmonic life.

Pianist We will survive. Who are you yourself?

Bruno Bruno Köster, humanist and teacher, of an ordinary German family of educators.

Pianist But you are an officer.

Bruno Minor officer. But in my heart and soul I am a worse deserter than my brother, since I wish to detach myself from my country, my people and my culture, which has been ravished beyond recognition by ourselves.

Pianist You still have the music.

Bruno That remains to be seen after the war. We might still have a long way to go to reach that end.

Pianist There is an end to all evil, and the more evil it is, the surer it will end, which will come the quicker.

Bruno We still seem to remain incorrigible optimists even in the heart of the ruins of the massacred capital of Poland, as if the war never even had existed here.

Pianist Chopin still lives on.

Bruno Yes, you proved that to me. Thanks for your existence and that you played for me.

Pianist I thought I was alone.

Bruno So thought I.

Pianist As a musician you are never alone.

Bruno Not even when the entire world is crumbling around you and falling into ruins, while all people are lost in the ruins and perish in concentration camps.

Pianist Don't talk about it. My entire family was lost that way.

Bruno I am sorry.

Pianist (suddenly bursting into bitter heart-rending crying)

Bruno (embracing him spontaneously) Cry, my friend. Cry out your pain. Cry for all those who cannot cry. Cry for the heartlessness and the meaningless cruelty, that has raped and rules the entire world. Let the tears flush away all evil by its floods of despair. That's almost the only thing that we few good remaining people still are good for in this world. *(Bruno comforts the crying pianist.)*

Pianist I am sorry. I have been too lonesome too long, all since my family was brought out by *der Umschlagplatz*.

Bruno You ask us of forgiveness, who never can be forgiven.

Pianist No, I just apologise for my weakness. I did not know that I still could cry.

Bruno That proves you a human being in contrast to all those who cannot cry.

Pianist When will the world become human again?

Bruno When all dictatorships are gone.

Pianist When will that be?

Bruno I am afraid it will be a long wait. We must have patience. That's our only chance, our only strength, our only hope and the only means for us to at length overcome the ravishers of the world.

Pianist And we also have our music for our means and instrument.

Bruno Play some more, Wladyslaw. Let Chopin triumph over the war.

Pianist (sits down by the piano again and plays Chopin's nocturne in C sharp minor.)

Scene 4. Leipzig.

Marlene Did he learn anything?

Goerdeler Nothing.

Wilhelm Even if he learned everything, Marlene, I am sure he would only love you the more.

Marlene Still I pray that he never may learn anything, and I ask you to keep my secret. I have no choice but to repress everything and keep all life buried alive within me. I can't take part in your underground movements and humanitarian activities against the establishment. I can't get out of myself. I can only love Bruno and concentrate my whole life on just being him the more faithful in my soul as I have failed him physically.

Wilhelm Marlene, I am convinced that he himself feels the same way about you.

Marlene Do you know anything about him?

Wilhelm We fear that he has been taken prisoner by the Russians.

Marlene What does that mean? Liberty or the opposite?

Goerdeler I am afraid it means the hardest ordeal imaginable. I always regarded the Russians as a worse alternative than the Nazis. Stalin is just another dictator like Hitler but worse. At Stalingrad a hundred thousand German prisoners were taken alive. According to my sources, only ten thousand have survived. If he is in a Russian prison camp, he will never come out alive before the war is over, if even then.

Wilhelm Don't make it worse for her, Karl, than it is already.

Marlene I am grateful for telling me exactly how it is. I would be grateful if you also would do so, uncle Wilhelm.

Wilhelm I will go back to the eastern front tomorrow. As usual I will make all possible investigations.

Marlene Thank you, father.

Wilhelm Are you all right? Do you manage?

Marlene We are safe with my friends in Dresden. Uncle Arthur doesn't drink so hard any more, and Germund and Gertrude live by their faith and trust. They know that both Bruno and Aldo are living, and that's enough for them to do and feel well. Don't you know anything about Aldo?

Wilhelm He took part in the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto but has never been heard of since. I heard though that Urzel is one of the leaders behind the organization of the partisan rebellion in Warsaw.

Marlene That doesn't surprise me. She was always my contrary in everything and the driving force behind all efforts at revolutions against the Nazis.

An adjutant (enters) He has arrived, Herr mayor.

Goerdeler Thank you. Unfortunately I must ask you to leave. I expect an important visit by an agent.

Wilhelm Is it your Swedish friend who is going to rescue Jews in Budapest?

Goerdeler Do you know him?

Wilhelm Raoul Wallenberg?

Goerdeler Yes.

Wilhelm No, but I know who he is. He is sent on a mission by Roosevelt and his bankers in America by the Swedish bank family Wallenberg to do something about the situation of all Jews in Budapest that Eichmann wants to send off to Auschwitz.

Goerdeler You are well informed, pater. Of course I must do everything I can to help him.

Wilhelm I wish I could help you, like the pope himself wishes he could do more about the desperate situation of the Jews in Germany.

Goerdeler Yes, the situation is truly desperate, so desperate, that I unfortunately could expect to be arrested at any moment.

Wilhelm Anything but not that. Only you could save Germany.

Goerdeler A new assassination attempt is planned against Hitler. Only that could save Germany.

Wilhelm Only the Germans themselves can save Germany before it is too late.

Goerdeler At least we managed to save your family, Marlene. That's my greatest pleasure at this moment.

Wilhelm Stick to them, Marlene, and forget everything you have heard and seen here. You are better off in your innocence and ignorance in Dresden, which I sincerely hope the war will never reach.

Marlene I am positive that we shall manage to keep the beauty and culture of Dresden intact and unmolested by the war, father.

Wilhelm Give them all my love.

Marlene I certainly will. Farewell, gentlemen, and good luck.

Goerdeler Goodbye, Marlene. *(Marlene leaves.)*

Wilhelm And I should be leaving for the eastern front, what's left of it, and leave you with your Swedish colleague.

Goerdeler Still everything is not lost, Wilhelm. We can still save what's left of Germany and get it out of the war. *(They shake hands and depart.)*

(When Wilhelm leaves he meets Raoul Wallenberg at the door.)

Wilhelm Raoul Wallenberg, I presume?

Raoul And who are you?

Goerdeler A Jesuit representative of the pope and his support for everything we try to do for Germany and its salvation out of the war.

Raoul (offers his hand to Wilhelm) I am honoured, colleague.

Wilhelm So am I. Good luck in Budapest. *(leaves)*

Raoul (reaches the desk and sits down in front of Goerdeler) Well, Karl, how are the odds?

Goerdeler So far we still have something to play with, chief accountant Wallenberg.

(They commence their discussions.)

Scene 5. The prison camp.

Martin The Russians don't believe you, Bruno. They are just messing with us.
Bruno (*worn and declined, unshaved and mistreated as a prisoner*) But what I say is the truth. They have to accept the truth and can't just discard what I claim without even checking my information.

Martin That's just what they do. They don't care about you.

Bruno There is a Geneva convention. They have to follow international regulations. All Germans were not Nazis just because the Nazis assumed power over them.

Martin That's what they assume that we are.

Bruno How discomfoting you are, Martin.

Martin I have understood our situation. You haven't.

Bruno Do you mean it's hopeless? We are treated like cattle for slaughter and are kept here only to die and are not even released although the war is coming to an end? Is that what you mean by understanding the situation?

Martin Something like that. Just because we are Germans we are worthless. You can see for yourself. They refuse to listen to us. They refuse to take us seriously. They refuse to treat us as human beings. They will do what they will with us. They let us die and then let us out from here only as corpses. I don't think they will even bury us. They just don't give a damn about us as whether we are alive or dead.

Bruno But they can't act like that. We are after all human.

medfängen That's just what we are not. We are Germans. As Germans we are stamped by the Nazi curse. Although we are prisoners we are still enemies because we have been loyal and fought for the Nazis. You should have deserted while you could. If there is anything I regret in life, it's that I didn't desert in Poland.

Bruno I couldn't for the sake of my family. My brother did and is still free as far as I know. Just because he did it, I never could, since someone had to protect the family.

Martin And did you succeed? Were your family left in peace? Were they not harassed by the Gestapo like everyone else? They were not investigated and controlled? They didn't try to find out whether they had any Jewish connections? Are they still alive and safe?

Bruno I don't know. We are not even allowed to write letters from here. I haven't heard anything from them since last time I was in Berlin.

Martin That must have been ages ago.

Bruno Yes.

Martin That's normal. Whatever you do, Bruno, don't insist. Don't brag about that you saved Jews in Poland. That will only make matters worse. Then they will listen even less, and you will be derided and beaten and harassed and branded as a mythomaniac. No one believes you. That any German would have helped any single Jew to survive the war is the most unbelievable impossibility. It simply could not occur.

Bruno But it is true! He was a concert pianist before the war! If the Russians have liberated Poland he must have been restored and been able to confirm my story.

Martin Have you tried writing to him?

Bruno I don't know if the letters get through.

Martin They probably don't. Here it is even considered a crime if a German knows how to write. It is not tolerated.

Bruno Cease your depressing cold showers! They only make the situation worse.

Martin It can't get any worse, Bruno. We are dead.

Bruno Not yet.

Martin But we are buried alive. That's worse than being dead.

Bruno If we are not liberated when there is peace, I will escape whatever it costs.

Martin You have nothing to lose. You will get shot and killed for real. Here your death will just be constantly postponed for no purpose.

Bruno We could escape together.

Martin I would love to, but where to? The Soviet Union is vast. It will take years to reach the border. Everyone will try to shoot us on the way. We can't conceal that we are Germans, Bruno, the most despicable and abominable people in the world, we who started the second world war and brought all Europe to ruins for no good at all, just because we chose the maddest leader in the world and insisted on causing the world the worst possible damage...

Bruno Stop it now, Martin.

Martin And of what good is it then that you actually saved a Jew in Warsaw? It's just laughable. One saved life among twenty million dead, all murdered by us Germans...

Bruno Martin, do you want to drive me to suicide?

Martin It would not help. It would not make anything better. Then you even miss the chance of becoming a martyr.

Bruno Is that all you have to look forward to? The privilege of becoming an anonymous martyr, forgotten and buried alive, a lost name, an unknown unidentifiable corpse in a mass grave?

Martin That's what we filled up all Europe with, especially eastern Europe along the front and as far into Russia as possible. No one has dug as many mass graves in history as we, and no one has filled them with more anonymous and innocent corpses.

Bruno I will escape, Martin, even if it only means death.

Martin Do so, if you want a future in Russia. Since if you escape you will never get out of Russia alive. We are here to stay. Stalin will let no one out of his concentration camps alive, whether Russians or Germans. That's the difference between Hitler's and Stalin's concentration camps. In those of Hitler you were thoroughly murdered, but in those of Stalin you are never even allowed to die. You are kept buried alive forever.

Bruno I am sure that the pianist Szpilman never will forget that I saved his life. He must search for me as soon as the war is over and get me out of here as innocent.

Martin Ha! No one is innocent here, least of all any German. And the war is not over yet. The Russians will continue fighting it forever against all possible counter revolutionaries. Even if the war in Europe will end, our war here will never end, for we can never do anything against the most hopeless superpower in the world.

Bruno I will never give up. What's wrong about you is that you have given up.

Martin There is nothing here to give up. We have nothing left, Bruno. Accept it. As Germans and losers of the war in which we launched the entire world, we have absolutely nothing left and least of all any right of existence.

Bruno You are hopeless.

Martin That's what I mean. I have at least realized and accepted it. You haven't.

A loudspeaker voice Achtung! All German prisoners of war to the barracks! Prepare for transition!

Martin Further east again, no doubt. We will all end up in Siberia, if we ever reach that far.

Bruno From Siberia, you could possibly escape to Mongolia or China or Tibet.

Martin Your optimism is even more ridiculous than your tall story that you saved the life of a Jew.

Bruno But it is true!

Martin Yes, go ahead and escape from Siberia to Tibet. You will surely make it all right for a start, until you get stuck in the tundra. (*pats his shoulder*) It's time to fill your little sack again. By every transition it will get more empty by

half. But there will always be something left at the bottom for next transport, even if it will finally only be a dead rat or cockroach.

Bruno Even that could be some nourishment if there is nothing else.

Martin That's what I mean.

(They go to their barracks together.)

Act V scene 1. A shabby café somewhere.
Aldo with Urzel by a table opposite Wilhelm.

Aldo How did it happen, father?

Wilhelm We don't know, Aldo. No one could take cover, and very few could get away.

Aldo Have they even found the corpses?

Wilhelm No. They have fifty thousand unidentified charred bodies, and still more are buried in the ruins.

Aldo So there is nothing left of all Dresden?

Wilhelm Nothing. Only black burnt ruins. And corpses.

Aldo But why?

Wilhelm I have tried to find out why. It's the question everyone keeps asking. According to the radio of the allies it was necessary to bomb Dresden because it was an important railway junction with much military traffic to the east. That explanation is no good. They could have bombed the railroad and left the city in peace. Responsible for the action was a certain Bomber Harris. He was also behind the fire storm of Hamburg, but that was unintentional. The fire storm occurred as a result of the massive bombings, and Harris appears to have been so inspired by this unexpectedly formidable result, that decided to do it again with real intention this time.

Aldo So the firestorm against Dresden was intentional?

Wilhelm Yes.

Aldo And almost only innocent casualties, mostly women and children, among them our own. Is there no chance that they might have got away?

Wilhelm They lived secretly in the city under false identities where the firestorm reached its greatest force. I was in touch with them the day before. No one suspected anything. They thought they were safe there.

Aldo On the run from Gestapo, and then they are subject to even more deadly terror by our own friends instead.

Urzel We have work to do, Aldo.

Wilhelm Germany is beaten and will never be able to rise again, and that's not because of you. Although the Nazis are still ruling over its remnants and

ruins, although Karl Goerdeler has been executed by them and Canaris is in prison waiting for his death sentence, although the White Rose has been executed by the millions in connection with Rommel and all remaining sense in Germany, there is nothing left for you in Germany to destroy, since its last remaining madness is devouring itself.

Aldo Urzel is thinking of what will come afterwards. When we made rebellion in Warsaw the Russians stood outside and refused to help us, as if they wanted the initiative of the Polish resistance to be annihilated by the Nazis. Then the Russians have taken over.

Urzel We now have a Soviet Union to fight.

Wilhelm (smiles) After having vanquished the bull you take on the elephant.

Urzel They say that an elephant could be scared to death by a rat.

Wilhelm It was the first and tiniest mammals that first attacked and consumed the eggs of the dinosaurs.

Aldo You know nothing about Bruno?

Wilhelm (sighs) I have tried everything. With the help of the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman we finally succeeded in tracing his prison camp, but when we got in touch with it he had been transferred. Then we had to start all over again. Raoul Wallenberg is also there somewhere, abducted by the Russians. They could have been brought all the way to Siberia.

Aldo Could he know anything about the fate of our own?

Wilhelm No. And that might be fortunate under the circumstances.

Urzel What will you do, father?

Wilhelm Move abroad as soon as possible. I hope to get to Sweden, the only country in Europe together with Switzerland that was left unharmed by the war. There will be many Catholic refugees to take care of. And what about you? Will you go back to Poland?

Aldo Yes. There is nothing for us to do here. Germany is to us a more charred corpse than our own.

Wilhelm Will we be able to keep in touch?

Aldo I hope so, father.

Urzel You will hear from us. When the Soviet Union falls you shall know that we are still alive.

Wilhelm This was my last world war. I could never take another one.

Urzel Who has mentioned war? That will not be needed. We now know how dictatorships work. They always rot from the inside. All you need is to help them along.

Wilhelm Euthanasia?

Urzel The opposite. You shall increase their pains, fasten the process.

Wilhelm I can't help admiring you, Urzel, but at the same time I must point out the injustice in the fact that you as active revolutionaries professing violence have managed through it all and are able to carry on in the same way, while the completely innocent and constructive Marlene and Bruno had to go under as the ideal representatives of culture they were.

Aldo We will find Bruno still, father, I promise you.

Wilhelm As dead or alive? Of what avail would it be to find him dead?

Aldo We will find him alive, father. We never give up.

Wilhelm (*touched, grasps the hands of Aldo and Urzel across the table, but can't find anything more to say.*)

Scene 2.

An even shabbier place somewhere in Poland several years later.

Aldo You say that you were together with Bruno in a prison camp?

Martin I am not lying.

Aldo I didn't say you were.

Martin But you don't believe me.

Aldo I have been searching for my brother for four years. I would never have believed you if the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman had not assured that what you say is true. So he really escaped?

Martin He swore to do so, and he did. I never thought he would make it, but he made it.

Aldo Where was it exactly?

Martin In far Tadjikistan east of Dushanbe. There was a snowstorm. He said, now or never, and he escaped. They didn't catch him. They searched for days and almost a week but then gave it up. They meant, that he would never get far and manage. But I know that he managed.

Aldo How do you know?

Martin I got to know him. I was with him for several years. He never gave up. When he learned about his family's extinction by the bombings of Dresden it had an opposite effect on him, so that he instead of getting devastated became the more determined.

Aldo Did he know that I was searching for him?

Martin He must have known. And I have a message for you.

Aldo A personal message for me?

Martin Yes. He foresaw that you would find me one day. He said, "Tell him, that I have deserted from the entire world and for good."

Aldo (*benumbed*) And you think he made it? You don't think he said it because he knew he would perish?

Martin He knew where he was going, for he knew what he wanted, and his will only grew fortified by his life in the camps.

Aldo Where to?

Martin Bergena in Tibet. He wished to find a monastery.

Aldo Monastery?

Martin Yes. He had come across some literature of the lamaistic culture, and that's where he wanted to vanish for good. And I am sure that he made it.

Aldo So he might be sitting now in some monastery beyond all geography to be thinking of us?

Martin That's most credible. I am almost certain that is the case.

Aldo Then I am satisfied. Then I can abandon my search for him. Thanks for your information, Martin.

Martin If he wants to come back he will, but I don't think he will. He had enough of your world.

Aldo That's no wonder. Who did not have enough of it, who was in the war?

Martin Can I be of any service to you in any other way?

Aldo Yes, you can, Martin. With your awesome experience and knowledge of Russian concentration camps you could be of extreme use for the gradual dissolvment of the Soviet Union.

Martin You want me for a spy and secret agent?

Aldo No, just a mole and infiltrator. You know Russian and Russia better than we. You could be an interpreter and informer. You could be of extreme value and use.

Martin I still have nothing else to live for, my family was also extirpated in the war, my wife and two children, so why not? What wouldn't you do counteract all the mismanagement of the world?

Aldo We must lead the world right, Martin, we who have seen the war and experienced the prison camps and the result of the total irresponsibility of the ruling world politics. We must replace the selfish intoxication madness and short-sightedness of power with its contrary, love and common sense, with respect for man and his natural rights of freedom and spirituality, with tolerance and democracy, so that dictatorships never more may occur when they all have been vanquished once and for all.

Martin I am on. Any work is better than no work.

Aldo Good, Martin. Then you must first of all get acquainted with my enterprising wife and her program of liberating the world from violence.

Martin That sounds rather naïve and too good to be true.

Aldo What the world needs is the contrary to Hitler and Stalin, and that's just what she is: democracy in absurdum on the basic gutter level but comprising all the world by constantly expanding underground activity.

Martin And you think you could bring down the Soviet Union?
Aldo We don't just think so. We know it will be so. Come!
(takes him with him out.)

The End.



Afterword

Pater Wilhelm Köster S.J. was a real person who came to Sweden in 1951 and was chiefly active in Gothenburg and Upsala as above all a priest for students and a legendary preacher until he grew too old and ended his days in Vienna 1985. I had personally the great privilege to get to know him both as child and grown-up in Gothenburg during my active years as a Catholic in the 60s and 70s. Bruno has borrowed some traits from colonel Wilm Hosenfeld, who actually rescued the life of the pianist in Warsaw after the destruction of the ghetto, but who (in contrast to Bruno) unfortunately died in Russian captivity by mistreatment and tribulations in 1952 - like Bruno, Hosenfeld was a teacher and humanist. Even Urzel has had her like in reality, whose real identity cannot be revealed, though.

The intentional firestorm that the allies carried through by mass bombing of Dresden, 'the Florence of the north', an art city of 650,000 inhabitants and 200,000 temporary refugees from the east, was completely unprotected and untouched up to February 13th 1945, when it was already clear since long that Germany already had lost the war, is one of the most controversial episodes of the Second World War, and they are still today arguing about the actual number of casualties, since that has never been able to be specified. The probably figure is somewhere between thirty and sixty thousand, the overwhelming majority consisting of civil women, aged people, refugees and children.

I always wished to pay some tribute to the German resistance movement during the Second World War, too little is still known about the White Rose and the real extent and activities of it, while Cardinal Clemens August von Galen actually survived the war as its untouchably stable rock and leading figure. The drama could be seen as no more than an effort to sketch out the contours of the life of many ordinary Germans who saw through Hitler and did what they could to work against him - the assassination attempts against him were after all numerous.

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