

Reading 6B

THE FUEHRER SPEAKS

CAST

An American Reporter, Narrator, Hitler Youth Member, Hitler, Five Members of the Audience, Edward R. Murrow, Ernie Pyle, William Shirer.

(WAGNERIAN MUSIC IS PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND)

AMERICAN REPORTER STANDING OFF TO ONE SIDE SPEAKING CLOSELY INTO MICROPHONE: Here we are at a Nazi rally. Thirty thousand people are packed into a huge hall. Brightly colored flags are draped from the ceilings and walls. A band is playing military music. Many people in the crowd have on different types of uniforms—Hitler Youth, the SA, the SS and others. Hitler’s arrival is always dramatic. The band stops and a hush falls over the enormous crowd. Then, at the moment he enters from the back of the hall, the band begins to play a triumphal march. The Fuehrer strides down the aisle slowly as thirty thousand hands go up in salute.

NARRATOR: By observing a Nazi rally, we can begin to understand some of the reasons for Hitler’s success. The rituals of this rally are always practiced. They had been carefully developed from the early days. “In such an atmosphere,” said one American reporter, “no wonder that every word dropped by Hitler seemed like an inspired Word from on high.” In the middle of the crowds, our roving reporter stops to interview an enthusiastic teenager in a Hitler Youth uniform.

REPORTER: Do you remember the first time you saw the Fuehrer?

HITLER YOUTH MEMBER: “Of course! I was six years old. On that March evening, perched on the shoulders of my Uncle Franz, I watched a torchlight parade of brownshirted storm troopers and Hitler Youth formations, through a flag-draped marketplace packed with what seemed to be the whole population. Clusters of people hung from windows and balconies, and a continuous storm of ‘Heil Hitler!’ drowned out the music of the...military band. But what drove the populace into a fever pitch of excitement was the man who stood in a black, open Mercedes...in front of the medieval city hall. He acknowledged the near-delirious homage of the crowd. I will never forget the rapture he invoked that night. On that evening, Hitler surely symbolized the promise of a new Germany, a proud Reich that had once again found its rightful place...”

NARRATOR: The youth stops talking as Hitler begins to speak.

(AUDIENCE MEMBERS SHOULD CHEER WHERE INDICATED)

HITLER: Stands straight at podium, with head high, looking almost into the distance.

Places both fists against chest as he speaks of “we.”

We and we alone stand for the rebirth of Germany.

(Points fist straight ahead with each phrase.)

One Empire! One People! One Leader!

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

We will struggle for the victory of the Aryan race and its soul of purity and strength!

(Lowers voice, leans forward and shakes head slowly—almost whispers.)

The politics of democracy has divided Germany against itself, made Germans materialistic, turned them from their roots in the soil and from their holy racial qualities that come from the blood and the land.

(Raises voice gradually and straightens up.)

No longer will there be political parties! No longer will society be subjected to the whims of the evil forces that have seeped into the body of the people, of the nation.

(Strikes chest with right fist upon speaking the words “We alone” then keeps hand at his chest.)

We alone will be able to carry out the necessary social reforms to cure our nation of its diseases.

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

(Lowers voice, dramatically.)

The infection and pollution of international finance has weakened Germany. We will cure it. We will make it strong again, as it was meant to be and as it was long ago. If we wish to carry out these social reforms, then the struggle must go hand in hand against the opponents of every social arrangement:

(Dramatic pause, then almost growls the next two words.)

the Jews.

(Slowly shakes head “no” throughout next sentence.)

Here, too, we know exactly that just scientific, intellectual understanding is not enough.

(Deliberate, emphasizing each word.)

After understanding must come organization, which changes into—

(Brief pause, looks at the audience, stares at one person and almost whispers next word.)

Action.

(AUDIENCE CHEERS AND CONTINUES CHEERING AS HE SPEAKS)

(Raises voice, almost yelling.)

Action is our cry!

(AUDIENCE CHEERS AND STOPS)

And the deed, the action remains firm:

(Pause. Emphasizes each of the underlined words by striking the table or podium with fist on each word.)

removal of the Jews from our nation!

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

(Quieter in normal tones, but still loud.)

Not because we should begrudge them their existence—we congratulate the rest of the world on their company—but because the existence of our own nation is a thousand times more important to us than that of an alien race.

(Leans forward shaking head “no.”)

There can be no compromises! There are only two possibilities—either victory of the Aryan or annihilation of the Aryan and victory of the Jew.

(Speaks with disgust, drawing out the word “vermin” and making it sound the same as the word “Bolsheviks.”)

Like vermin the Bolsheviks have infiltrated our people.

(Continues to speak slowly, as if to make an important point.)

The Jewish-Bolsheviks conspiracy has advanced almost to victory.

(Pauses, looks around then speaks the next two words evenly and almost quietly.)

Until now.

(Looks to heaven and puts fists to chest; almost sobs the first two words.)

We alone will know how to eradicate the threat. We will defeat it once and for all.

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

(Spreads arms and looks out at the audience.)

We know the solution to the Jewish problem in Germany.

(Points finger straight ahead and glowers.)

If at the beginning of the War of 1914 to 1918 and during the War, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under the poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.

(Continues, getting louder and faster but pausing after each phrase, gesturing with his hands at each phrase.)

These race-polluters, defilers of the blood, these perverted enemies of the Aryan race have defiled our blood and society. They have crawled into every place in the culture: science, art, newspapers, business, banking, politics, everywhere!

(Quick horizontal motion of both hands across body like umpire's safe sign.)

Jewish-Bolshevik art will be banned.

(Gestures with hands as if breaking something in half. Voice gets louder gradually.)

Jewish businesses and newspapers and banks will be destroyed. Jewish-Bolshevik politics will be exterminated. And, even if German science must come to a halt for a hundred years, Jewish science will be removed. They will be cut out root and branch from our midst.

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

(Looks to heaven again, raising both hands and exclaiming.)

Germany will be clean of Jews! And the Aryan will prosper, will multiply, will inherit his true place throughout Europe—

(Yells, emphasizing each word with voice and raising right hand, outstretched straight up for each two word phrase.)

ONE EMPIRE! ONE PEOPLE! ONE LEADER!

(Louder still.)

SIEG—HEIL! FOR VICTORY—HAIL!

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

(Hitler continues to yell with both fists shaking stretched out in front of him as if punching the air.)

If we must go to war again for our rightful place as the most powerful and heroic Aryan people, then the Jews will pay dearly for their crimes of November 1918! If there will be war, then the Jews of Europe will be destroyed. ONE EMPIRE! ONE PEOPLE! ONE LEADER! SIEG—HEIL!

(AUDIENCE CHEERS)

NARRATOR: Now we are in the International Broadcasting System's European studio in Munich, Germany. Present are three American reporters, Edward R. Murrow, William Shirer and Ernie Pyle. They are sitting around a table discussing Hitler's speech.

WILLIAM SHIRER: This was another rabble-rousing, stirring speech. But do you think the audience, those who listened over the radio as well as those who were there, listened thoughtfully? I had several questions.

EDWARD R. MURROW: You could feel the electricity in the air, all right. But what did some of those words and phrases mean? What, for example, did he mean by the "rebirth of Germany?" Was he implying that the country had died? Was that a symbolic reference to the German defeat in 1918? Or did he mean Germany was starting over? Has he written off the Weimar Republic altogether? His references to the end of democratic political parties seem very threatening.

ERNIE PYLE: More than that, what does "one empire" mean? Is Germany going to try to become a European empire again? Does "one people" mean that all the differences between the Germans are going to be removed? And "one leader" seems to imply a dictatorship that will remove any possibility of other German leaders directing the policies of the country.

SHIRER: He seemed to say that they “one people” would be the “Aryan” people. Does anybody know who they are? Is that a racial group? Is it a national group or ethnic group? Who is going to decide who is “Aryan” and who isn’t? These are all important questions. But the main question is: How many of those 30,000 people really listened to what Hitler said? Could all those people tolerate such horrible things said about the Jews?

MURROW: It seems clear that the Jews don’t fit into Hitler’s category of “Aryan” or German for that matter. That reference to poison gas in the First World War was not only gruesome, it was puzzling. Doesn’t he know that among the tombstones of the German soldiers who died for Germany are 12,000 with Stars of David on them? This point was unclear to me—how could he attack German Jews, most of whom are strong German patriots?

PYLE: I would guess that few if any of the crowd cared about how many German Jews gave their lives for their country. In that electric atmosphere, not many people would think so clearly. It was frightening to see 30,000 hands go up and hear all those voices screaming “Sieg, Heil” together.

SHIRER: Perhaps this was another example of his use of rhetoric, speaking style, to cover up a lack of real meaning. Do you think those 30,000 people stopped to think about what any sentence meant?

MURROW: It was fascinating and frightening to see the crowd react with the salute and the shouting. There was little if any thoughtful response to what Hitler said. The crowd reacted to how he said it.

PYLE: What was most frightening was the talk of “Aryan purity.” Does anyone know what that is? Surely some of those people in the audience were aware that talk of “pollution” of blood and race is preposterous.

SHIRER: Incidentally, how many Jewish banks and businesses are there in Germany? I believe that no banks are owned by Jews. And very few of the leading businesses and industries are owned by Jews. Yet, Hitler claims the Jews run the banks and the businesses. Is he deliberately lying?

PYLE: And how can he claim the Jews are all Bolsheviks? The Bolsheviks are anti-capitalist, that is, they want to destroy all banks and major private industries and businesses. It seems that Hitler accuses Jews of being with whatever group he is against.

MURROW: Will any of his people respond thoughtfully? Will he be tested in the public arena by our German counterparts in the press and the media? Can anyone ask for definitions of his terms? Can we find out what his words really meant? In a democracy, it is every citizen’s duty to think about what their leaders tell them and evaluate it rationally, not emotionally. Hitler’s style and rhetoric prevent people from thinking about what he says.

PYLE: There seems to me no question that the Jews of Germany are in some danger. They may be expelled or lose their homes and possessions, as well as their civil rights. But when that happens, all Germans are in danger. Where will it stop once that first group is taken away? Germans, if it's not too late, need to carefully examine what this man tells them and asks them to tolerate. It is the fate of Germany, as well as of the Jews, that is at issue.

MURROW: Can we find any trace of critical thinking in a crowd? As Mr. Shirer here once wrote: "MAN'S—OR AT LEAST THE GERMAN'S—CRITICAL FACULTY IS SWEEPED AWAY AT SUCH MOMENTS, AND EVERY LIE IS ACCEPTED AS HIGH TRUTH ITSELF."