

Kastner

A play by Motti Lerner

Translated from Hebrew by Imre Goldstein

This version of the play differs slightly from the version of the original production at the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv in 1985. It was written in 1988 for the production of the play at the Heilbronn Theatre in Germany

Director and dramaturg – Ilan Ronen

Characters

The Jews

Samu Stern, Baron, head of the liberal faction of the Jewish Community in Budapest; later, head of the Judenrat.

Fülöp (*Philip*) Freudiger, head of the Orthodox faction of the Jewish Community in Budapest; later, member of the Judenrat.

Otto Komoly, chairman of the Zionist Federation in Hungary; head of the Zionist Rescue Committee.

Rudolf (*Rezső*) Kastner, vice-chairman of the Zionist Federation in Hungary; member of the Rescue Committee.

Joel Brand, member of the Rescue Committee.

Hansi Brand, Joel Brand's wife; member of the Rescue Committee.

Elizabeth (*Bogyó*) Kastner, Kastner's wife.

Helen Kastner, Kastner's mother.

Imre Varga, member of the Revisionist (*Zionist*) movement in Budapest.

Miklós Benedek, Jewish journalist (*a fictitious character*).

Malchiel Grünwald, Hungarian Jew, resident of Jerusalem. Following his several publications about Kastner's activities, a libel suit was brought against him by the Israeli government's legal advisor.

The Germans

Adolf Eichmann, head of Section IV B4 of the Reich Main Security Office (*in charge of Jewish affairs*).

Hermann Krume, Eichmann's deputy.

Dieter Wisliceny, Eichmann's assistant.

Helmut, Eichmann's personal attendant (*a fictitious character*).

The Hungarians

László Endre, secretary of state for Jewish Affairs. A fascist.

László Bak, commander of the Hungarian Gendarmerie. A fascist.

Dr. Schneller, Hungary's finance minister. A former liberal.

Lulu, a prostitute (*a fictitious character*).

Place and Time

Budapest, between March 19, 1944, and July 1, 1944.

*The Prologue, and most of the Epilogue, take place in the District Court of
Jerusalem in 1954.*

Prologue

Grünwald: Your Honor, my entire family—the Grünwalds, a very large family—was killed in the war along with most of Hungary's Jews. Luckily for me, I was already here in Israel at the time. To this very day, Your Honor, I cannot comprehend, either logically or emotionally, how the members of my family and those 700,000 other unfortunates got on the trains that took them to Auschwitz. I have been asking, Your Honor, and will keep on asking whether this terrible murder was really unavoidable?

Consider, Your Honor, that by the summer of 1944, when the Germans invaded Hungary, the Russians had already reached the Carpathians, the Americans had captured Italy, and the Third Reich was in a state of collapse. Was it not possible to save 700,000 Jews from the claws of the defeated Nazis? *(Komoly's apartment. Violent knocking at the door)*

Komoly: Who is it?

Brand: It's me, Brand. *(Komoly opens the door)* The Germans have invaded the country.

Komoly: Invaded the country?

Brand: Yes. The army has surrendered. In two hours they'll be in Budapest. *(Blackout)*

Grünwald: Your Honor, I know that the free world did nothing to help; it remained indifferent to the end. But that is not the only explanation for the terrible genocide. My own investigations have led me to the shocking conclusion that there were guilty ones among our own people. People who were ready to collaborate with the Nazi murderers. Some did it to save their own skins, some did it for profit, and some to satisfy their delusions of grandeur and hunger for power. And the man the Nazis made the most use of in order to carry out their crimes was, without the slightest shadow of a doubt, Dr. Rudolf Rezső Kastner!

Kastner's apartment. Brand is knocking on the door.

Brand: Rezső, Rezső...

Kastner: What's the matter?

Brand: The Germans have invaded the country.

Kastner: When?

Brand: This morning. The BBC is talking about seven divisions.
(*Blackout*)

Grünwald: I know what people involved in this trial say about me. They say: “Malchiel Grünwald is a psychopath.” It seems that psychopath means someone who insists that we must get at the truth. And I do insist, not for myself, but for the sake of our national conscience and honor. No one will silence me until the terrible crimes of Dr. Kastner come to light, crimes for which he is still wanted in Hungary as a war criminal and collaborator. The people must know the truth.

Stern’s apartment. Kastner is knocking on the door.

Servant: Whom would you like to see, sir?

Kastner: Baron Stern, please.

Servant: Your name, sir?

Kastner: Kastner, Dr. Rudolf Kastner. I must speak with the Baron. It’s very urgent.

Servant: You had better come back in an hour, sir. On Sundays, the Baron sleeps until eight o’clock. (*Blackout*)

Grünwald: Do the people know that Dr. Kastner saved his family for the price of keeping the truth from his fellow Jews about Auschwitz and the gas chambers? Do the people know that only because of that did hundreds of thousands of Jews get on the trains, in complete ignorance, on the way to Auschwitz? Do the people know that only because of that did those same hundreds of thousands go quietly into the showers, without a word, without the slightest resistance? Are the people aware of Eichmann’s proposal to Joel Brand? The proposal that could have saved all of Hungary’s Jews, had it not been for Kastner’s collaboration with the Germans, and for the helplessness of the Jewish Agency here, in this country?

Do the people know that after the war Dr. Kastner interceded with the Allies for the Nazi leaders who had destroyed the Jews of Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia? That he worked for the release without punishment of such murderers as Kurt Becher, Hermann Krumey, and Dieter Wisliceny?

Do the people know that those few refugees who did manage to get here from Hungary have been trying to take revenge on this man, the cause of their unspeakable sufferings? Your Honor, the stench

of a carcass assails my nostrils. This will be a happy and joyous funeral, indeed. Dr. Kastner must be destroyed!

Act I

Scene 1

Offices of the Jewish Community in Budapest. Stern, Freudiger, Krumei, and Wisliceny. In one corner stands a German soldier with his weapon at the ready.

- Krumei: Don't be alarmed. This is only a courtesy visit. We thought we should get to know each other. To reassure you. Frightened leaders can bring disaster on their community. Notice, gentlemen. We did not break into your place, and we have no intention of confiscating any documents. You are surprised. You can see for yourselves that all those rumors about us are simply not true. Especially those about Obersturmbannführer Eichmann. By the way, Obersturmbannführer Eichmann has already arrived in Budapest, and this meeting is taking place at his request. *(Clicks his heels)* May I introduce myself: I'm Obersturmbannführer Hermann Krumei, his deputy.
- Wisliceny: *(Clicks his heels)* Hauptsturmführer Dieter Wisliceny. Judenkommando.
- Stern: This is Philip von Freudiger, head of our Orthodox Community. *(Freudiger bows)*
- Krumei: Aren't you going to offer us something to drink, Baron Stern?
- Stern: But of course, Herr Obersturmbannführer. Right away. *(Rings bell)*
- Krumei: We are very keen on a purposeful and relaxed atmosphere. It's a lot easier to reach understanding in a pleasant atmosphere, don't you agree?
- Stern: Yes, I do, Herr... *(Enter Servant)* Wine for my guests. *(Exit Servant)*
- Wisliceny: Nice office you've got here, Baron Stern. Comfortable, still with servants and old-fashioned formalities.
- Stern: The war hasn't affected us yet, sir.
- Krumei: And I hope it won't either. It's all up to you.
- Freudiger: What exactly do you mean, sir, that it's all up to us? *(Enter Servant, serves wine. Exit)*

- Krumey: Naturally, we do not expect cooperation from you. We are not that naive. *(No reaction)* We expect only a dialogue. If we can talk to each other, we may reach an understanding. *(Motions to Wisliceny, who hands him a sheet of paper)* On this list, you'll find the names of about five hundred Jews. Leaders of institutions and organizations here in Budapest. Obersturmbannführer Eichmann would like to meet them, to get to know them. Tomorrow. At four in the afternoon. *(Hands list to Stern, who looks at it)*
- Stern: You want us to invite all these people to the meeting?
- Krumey: Why not? Opposite each name you'll find the address as well.
- Stern: That's a rather difficult task for us to...
- Krumey: We don't want to waste any time. Look, we're still busy setting up our own offices. Yours are well equipped, you've got secretaries, messengers. You can start right away.
- Freudiger: We can send out the invitations, sir, wire some people and make telephone calls, but I'm not sure that those invited will come.
- Wisliceny: If you want my advice, tell them that it's for their own good; that Obersturmbannführer Eichmann would like to talk things over with them.
- Freudiger: You must understand, sir, people are afraid. We're in an emergency situation, there are curfews. War is raging at our borders, and there are rumors of a strong-hand policy . . .
- Stern: Fifteen hundred people were arrested this morning, sir.
- Wisliceny: Arrested?
- Krumey: You mean those arrested at the railway station?
- Wisliceny: Oh... those...
- Stern: Yes.
- Krumey: They've been temporarily interned at Kistarcsa. These are simple preventive detentions. They'll be released right after having been interrogated, the moment the emergency situation is lifted.
- Stern: Those on your list will ask for a guarantee of their safety at the meeting. What can we tell them, Herr Obersturmbannführer?
- Wisliceny: What sort of guarantees would you like?
- Krumey: There's no need for guarantees. We understand your apprehensions. We'll take no steps against those who won't show up.

- Freudiger: Perhaps we could have this meeting the day after tomorrow, Herr Obersturmbannführer? That would give us time to talk with most of the leaders personally and convince them to come.
- Krumei: Why waste time? Every passing day only adds to the confusion and anxiety. Between now and four tomorrow, you can talk to all of them. *(Pause)* Tomorrow at four then?
- Stern: We'll do our best, but we can't give you any assurance that all of them will come, sir...
- Krumei: You don't have to; we understand. *(Gets up)*
- Wisliceny: The wine was excellent. A bit too sweet, but with body. And the bouquet . . .
- Krumei: Baron Stern, I'd very much like to pay a visit to your community's museum. I've heard so much about it. Perhaps tomorrow after the meeting with Obersturmbannführer Eichmann, if it's convenient for you...
- Stern: By all means, sir. I'd be glad to show you around. *(Turns to see the Germans out)*
- Krumei: Don't trouble yourself, we'll find our way out. Heil Hitler! *(Stern and Freudiger mumble some kind of reply. Exit the Germans)*
- Freudiger: *(Nervous)* We can't invite our people for them! If anything happens to them, God forbid, their blood will be on our hands.
- Stern: It's better that the invitations come from us. That way attendance is optional. Anybody who doesn't want to come will have time to draw his own conclusions.
- Freudiger: People will honor invitations signed by the head of the community. They trust you.
- Stern: I'll talk to the Interior Minister. I'll ask him to send a representative to the meeting. I can't believe the Germans would do anything in the presence of a representative of the Hungarian government.
- Freudiger: This same Wisliceny made a deal with the Chief Rabbi of Slovakia two years ago. Maybe we can work something out with him... with gifts... money. We have to make a deal with him to reduce this list.
- Stern: This is not Slovakia, Philip. And here we won't have deals like that. We have laws, and there is still a government here. So long as the law hasn't collapsed, we won't make any illegal deals. *(Enter Servant)*
- Servant: Two people wish to see you, sir. They wouldn't tell me their names. *(Enter Endre and Baky)*

Stern: *(To Servant)* It's all right. *(Exit Servant)*

Endre: How are you, Baron?

Stern: I'm well, thank you. *(Points to Freudiger)* Philip Freudiger, head of the Orthodox Community. *(Freudiger bows; his bow gets no response)* What can I do for you?

Baky: What's the rush, sir? We're not in a hurry.

Endre: We haven't seen each other for a long time, Baron. Not since that nasty little affair in the Interior Ministry. Right, Baron? *(To Freudiger)* The Baron here suggested they fire me. The Baron has excellent connections in the Interior Ministry.

Stern: Mr. Endre, that affair was over ten years ago.

Endre: Now it is, Baron, now, at last. Your friend the Interior Minister, Ferenc Fischer, was fired.

Baky: I took him to the railway station myself this morning. Destination Dachau.

Freudiger: Dachau?

Baky: Oh yes, yes. He sends you both his best. He hopes to see you soon. Obersturmbannführer Eichmann personally waved goodbye to him from the platform.

Endre: And your other good friend, Prime Minister Kallay, isn't with us anymore either. He's also realized that the affair was over and asked for political asylum in the Turkish Embassy.

Baky: The Foreign Minister, although he wasn't personally involved in the affair, put a little bullet through his own head. Imagine that. Right in his own office. In front of his staff. The funeral is tomorrow. We'll all be there, shedding crocodile tears. *(Pause)*

Stern: *(Totally unmoved)* What can I do for the two of you?

Endre: Oh... Thank you so much for your good intentions. For the moment, however, we've come only to present ourselves. *(Points to Baky)* László Baky, Commander of the Gendarmerie. *(Points to himself)* László Endre, Secretary of State for Jewish Affairs. These appointments took effect this morning.

Baky: *(To Freudiger)* Nice to have met you.

Endre: Please don't let us disturb you any further. You probably have lots of things... to think about. Just wanted to take the opportunity to let you know that we are now in charge of all problems concerning

Jews. All the problems. From beginning to end. I'm sure you'll be ready to cooperate with us, won't you? Heil Hitler! (*Blackout*)

Scene 2

Kastner's apartment. Kastner, Komoly, Brand. Komoly is trying desperately to get a line on the telephone.

Brand: We can't go to this meeting with Eichmann. He knows we're Zionists. He also knows about all our activities. Will he let us smuggle people into Romania? Or hide Polish refugees? And most likely the Gestapo knows about our connections with the Jewish Agency in Istanbul. We go to that meeting and they'll just arrest us.

Kastner: If they know so much about you, why don't they just come and arrest you? Why should they organize this ceremony?

Brand: They want to save themselves the trouble of looking for me. They know I won't wait for them at home. We must find a way to hide and continue our activities . . .

Komoly: Hide where? Have we prepared hiding places? Food? Bunkers?
(*On the phone*) Hello ...hello ...we've had five years to prepare and we've done nothing. (*On the phone*) Hello... hello...

Kastner: This isn't the time to dwell on the past. Otto, please, let's try to understand why they want us at this meeting. Why the meeting at all?

Brand: I've told you. They want to arrest us.

Kastner: (*Angry*) So that's why they gave us a thirty-hour advance notice? That we'd have time to escape?

Komoly: What I don't understand is how we've managed to convince ourselves that the Germans wouldn't invade the country. The signs were so clear. (*On the phone*) Hello... hello? ... Yes, yes... Otto speaking. 4781 please. (*To Kastner*) It's Deputy Foreign Minister Meszek.

Kastner: You'll see he knows less than we do.

Komoly: Hello... yes... Otto Komoly speaking... Yes, it is very urgent indeed... Tell him I'll hold on. Tomorrow? I can't wait until tomorrow... Disconnected again. (*Pause. Knock at the door*)

Varga: (*From outside*) Kastner... Kastner...

Kastner: Who is it?

Varga: Dr. Varga.

Kastner: (*Opens door*) Come in... What's the matter?! (*To Komoly*) Mr. Komoly, what are you planning to do?

Komoly: We're discussing it right now. (*To Brand*) Try this number. Maybe he's at home.

Varga: Mr. Komoly, discussions will get you nowhere. I've come to tell you that the Revisionist movement is seriously considering going underground. The leadership hasn't made a final decision but...

Komoly: (*Cutting him off decisively*) An underground of fourteen people?

Varga: There are more... but I won't tell you how many. (*Pause*) Mr. Komoly... This is an emergency situation. We're all Zionists. We must pull together and act together. I've heard that Baron Stern has already met with the Germans. We know how they operate. They'll set up a Judenrat, and I'm willing to bet my life that Baron Stern will be made head of the Judenrat. This must not happen. The Zionists must remove him and take over the leadership of the Community underground.

Komoly: Varga, the Germans have the name and address of every one of us. If they find out we set up an underground movement, we'll be arrested in five minutes.

Varga: That's why we must hide. Mr. Komoly, if you decide to go underground and personally lead the movement, many people will join you... from the *Revisionists*¹, the *Hashomer Hatzair*², and also some of the Polish refugees who have never questioned your leadership.

Komoly: Varga, we are a Zionist Rescue Committee, not a "Zionist Opposition Committee," and our task is to rescue people, not to resist. Maybe there's still a chance to save people. Resistance means suicide. Do you understand? So please stop running around and spreading such wild ideas before checking them out. (*Exit Varga angrily*)

Brand: Varga's gone off his rocker. (*Enter Bogyo*)

Bogyo: More coffee, anyone?

Brand: Not for me, thanks. Hansi's waiting for me with breakfast. (*Exeunt Komoly and Brand. Blackout*)

¹ Right wing Zionist party

² Left wing youth movement

Scene 3

Stern and Dr. Schneller, in their respective offices, are talking to each other on the telephone.

- Stern: Still, Mr. Minister, I implore you, there should be a representative of the government at this meeting. If not a senior representative, at least a junior one.
- Schneller: I'd very much like to send one, Baron Stern, but as I've told you, I'm not at all certain I'm still authorized to give such an order. I'm not even sure I'm still the Finance Minister.
- Stern: Perhaps you could check with Admiral Horthy, sir. According to the latest rumors, he is still Head of the State. I'm sure he'd agree to send a representative, if only you asked him. I wouldn't want to bother him on a day like this.
- Schneller: According to the rumors I've heard, I'm not sure the Admiral is still authorized to give orders. I beg you to wait until the overall picture clears up a bit. For the moment, I'm sorry. I'd like to help... if only I could. *(Blackout)*

Scene 4

Kastner's apartment. Kastner and Bogyo.

- Bogyo: Would you like something to eat?
- Kastner: Yes.
- Bogyo: You were talking so loud, I've heard everything.
- Kastner: Otto's got me worried. Suddenly, he's wavering. He won't manage alone. I must go with him tomorrow.
- Bogyo: Go where?
- Kastner: To that meeting with Eichmann.
- Bogyo: How can you even think of such a thing? I'm sure Otto isn't planning to go either.
- Kastner: He has no choice. They called him. You think he can say no?
- Bogyo: Let Otto do what he pleases. But why should you be pushed around?
- Kastner: Otto won't manage without me. He's become so cautious he can't make any decisions.

Bogyo: You must be cautious, too. First thing in the morning we're going to the Romanian Embassy to see about visas.

Kastner: And what should I say if somebody asks why the visas?
That we're going on a holiday, right? Come on, I'll make the coffee, you make us something to eat. *(Blackout)*

Scene 5

Lights on in Stern's office and in Freudiger's apartment. Late at night. Stern and Freudiger are talking on the telephone.

Freudiger: Yes, yes, almost all of them got it. I think most of them will show up. Maybe all. Except for Komoly.

Stern: *(Surprised)* Komoly won't come?

Freudiger: Not sure. The Zionists may try to do all sorts of things on their own.

Stern: That worries me a lot, Philip. Would you please tell Komoly for me that if he's planning something irresponsible, we will not support him. We'll do more than that; we'll try to stop him. We shouldn't do anything to provoke them. That's all we need now! *(Blackout)*

Scene 6

Noon. Brand's apartment. Preparing for the meeting with Eichmann, Brand is packing a small suitcase. His wife, Hansi, is in the kitchen, offstage.

Brand: Please don't hold me up any longer, Hansi. Eichmann is a stickler for time. All I need is to be late for this meeting.

Hansi: *(From the kitchen)* Coming.

Brand: Hansi, enough. I have no appetite, anyway. You think Eichmann will wait until you finish making my sandwiches?

Hansi: *(Enters)* Here you are. I wrapped a loaf of bread in brown paper. There's some smoked meat in this box, and two bottles of cognac.

Brand: All right. Thank you. *(Puts provisions into suitcase)*

Hansi: Your coat.

Brand: No more room. *(Takes out a bunch of keys)* This is the key to the cash box. It must be kept somewhere safe. This is the one to the mailbox. I'm leaving you my telephone book. These are the

numbers in Istanbul. These are the ones in Zurich. Take special care of this...

Hansi: All right. Keep the house keys. Here, put on your coat.

Brand: It's warm outside. I can't wear an overcoat on a day like this...
Hansi, if anything should happen, first of all report it to the committee in Istanbul... If Rezső hadn't asked me, I'd have stayed home.

Hansi: You've said that about five times. Take the coat.

Brand: No room.

Hansi: Take it in your hand.

Brand: Stop it, Hansi. Oh... almost forgot. The car keys. Take them. Don't forget to keep the tank full at all times. That's it. I'm going.

Hansi: Where are you going? I'm taking you.

Brand: What do you mean you're taking me? I don't want you anywhere near there.

Hansi: Stop wasting time. Nothing will happen. Come on. I'll take you. Give me the coat.

Brand: Hansi, I beg you. Stay here.

Hansi: Don't worry, I'll wait for you outside.

Brand: Don't try to fool me, I know you won't wait outside. Besides, they can arrest people outside, too.

Hansi: Nobody will notice me. *(Taking his coat)*

Brand: Leave that coat alone. I won't take it. Rezső will die laughing if he sees me show up with a coat and a suitcase. And please, stay home.

Hansi: I'm coming with you. I want to see this man Eichmann.

Let's have no argument about it.

Brand: Hansi!

Hansi: Shall we go? *(Telephone rings. Brand picks it up)*

Brand: Yes, Otto... I see... *(Slams receiver down)* It was Otto.

We're not going to the meeting. The Germans will announce the establishment of a Judenrat today. If we go to the meeting, we'll have to be a part of it. *(Blackout)*

Scene 7

About five hundred leaders of various Jewish organizations are gathered in the assembly hall of the Jewish Community in Budapest. Armed soldiers are stationed at the corners of the stage. Enter Krumei and Wisliceny, take their places on the stage. Short pause. Enter Eichmann.

Krumei: Heil Hitler!

Eichmann: Heil Hitler! *(Looks at his audience for a few seconds then speaks)*
I'm glad to see that most of you have answered my invitation.

There was no need for you to bring suitcases. The moment I finish what I have to say, you will all return, safely, to your homes. I am fully aware of the vicious propaganda conducted against me in the last few years. It's only natural that you, too, should be affected by it, yes? I am ready to challenge anyone who claims that I have ever harmed a single Jew. Is there anyone in this hall with such a claim? Is there anyone here who has ever seen me harm a Jew? Or a non-Jew?

Transition to Kastner's apartment. Morning. Kastner, Helen, and Bogyo are sitting around the breakfast table

Kastner: They were all stunned, Mother. And he went on and on and on, and they believed him. If he had continued for another fifteen minutes, he would have been unanimously elected head of the Judenrat. What naiveté! What do you say, Mother, maybe we'll ask him to come with us to the opera tomorrow?

Helen: You're always trying to be smarter than everybody else, Rezső. I've heard that some of the arrested people have actually been released. Exactly as he promised. Just as we got through the last war, we'll get through this one, too.

Eichmann: *(Back to the assembly hall)* We are at the peak of our mighty efforts on the Eastern Front. The Wehrmacht has entered Hungary in order to protect her from the Russians. The entire Hungarian nation is mobilized for the war. We expect Hungarians of the Mosaic faith to do their share, too, in this crucial effort. We need the Jews now more than ever before. And I promise you right here, in the presence of my assistants, that not a hair on the heads of those who join us in this work—our war production—will be harmed. Of course, we have no cure against natural balding.

- Bogyo: *(Back to Kastner's apartment. To Kastner)* I still don't think we'll lose anything by applying for visas to Romania, Rezső. *(Exit to kitchen)*
- Kastner: It's just the other way around, Mother. Now, after Eichmann's promises, Romanian Jews will ask for visas to come here. *(Enter Bogyo)*
- Helen: *(To Bogyo)* If you think it would be better in Romania, you're mistaken. If they've got this far, they'll get to Romania, too. And if not the Germans, then the Russians.
- Bogyo: Did I say I loved the Russians? But from Romania we can go to Switzerland.
- Eichmann: You have to explain these things to the members of your respective communities and reassure them. Our experience in organizing relationships with Jewish communities is most extensive. We shall soon submit to your authorized institutions several plans at the core of which is the establishment of a Central Jewish Council, a Judenrat, yes? Let me conclude with the words of a great Hungarian Jew who once lived among you, Dr. Theodor Herzl³: "Each man will do his duty to his nation, his homeland, and his faith." Let us all act according to these words. *(Blackout)*

Scene 8

Krumey and Stern, on their way out of the Jewish Museum in Budapest.

- Krumey: A very impressive museum, Baron. But these were not the pictures I've been looking for. I'm almost sure, sir, that most of your friends didn't obey the Führer's order to hand over their paintings to us. In their cellars and basements, we can probably find other names as well, like van Gogh, Paul Klee, Gauguin, Cézanne, and that Spanish genius ...Pablo Picasso...
- Stern: I wouldn't know, Herr Obersturmbannführer, I've never rummaged through the private basements of my friends.
- Krumey: You should start then, sir. Sending my own men to do the job could be very unpleasant for your friends. I want a detailed list. Within a week, if possible.
- Stern: What list, sir?

³ Founder of the Zionist Movement

Krumey: Of paintings, Baron, paintings. One more thing, sir. I'd like two or three, actually four or five pianos. Bechsteins, of course. Please see to it that they're in my office by tomorrow. Is that clear?

Scene 9

SS offices. Wisliceny is eating; a bottle of beer and a large mug in front of him. Enter Freudiger, followed by an armed soldier.

Soldier: Heil Hitler!

Wisliceny: *(With his mouth full)* Heil Hitler!

Soldier: He was armed, Herr Hauptsturmführer.

Wisliceny: Armed? With what?

Soldier: *(Produces a penknife)* With this, Herr Hauptsturmführer.

Freudiger: It's a penknife to clean my fingernails with, sir.

Wisliceny: *(Laughs)* Your fingernails get dirty sometimes, too, eh? *(Motions for the soldier to leave. Returns knife to Freudiger)*

Freudiger: Excuse me, sir, I didn't mean to disturb you in the middle of your meal.

Wisliceny: You're not disturbing me at all. *(Pause)* I hear you.

Freudiger: I'm here about the arrest of my brother...

Wisliceny: Moritz Freudiger.

Freudiger: Yes. Obersturmbannführer Eichmann has promised...

Wisliceny: Yes, I know. He's got a big problem, your brother. I'd be glad to help, but there seems to be clear evidence that he's stashed away foreign currency. Normally, people like that are shot on the spot. If he's lucky, he'll only be sent to a labor camp.

Freudiger: Exactly, sir. If he gets lucky. About the labor camp. If you'd be willing to hire somebody else to do my brother's work, naturally, I'd be ready to cover all the expenses such a replacement might entail. *(Pulls out a wad of bills)*

Wisliceny: Such a possibility hasn't occurred to me, Herr Freudiger. It's an interesting idea. And just on my birthday, too. It's a pleasure doing business with you.

Freudiger: My brother's name is...

Wisliceny: Moritz Freudiger. He just got lucky, your brother. *(Blackout)*

Scene 10

A street in Budapest. Varga and Kastner.

- Varga: They've already arrested 3,000 Jews. Who knows how many of them are still alive. I told you they'd set up a Judenrat, remember? Otto is kaput, Rezső. Sits around the house doing nothing but talking on the phone. Talks, talks, talks. Otto must be removed, and you have to take over. I'll take care of our leadership. We'll contact the Hungarian underground, even the Communists. You are the man...
- Kastner: The whole Hungarian underground is in Dachau already. And you're the only one who has told me about a Communist underground...
- Varga: All right, let's leave Otto where he is as a cover. But you should give the orders. We'll obey you unconditionally.
- Kastner: My first order, Varga, is for you to go home, take a tranquilizer, and stop roaming the streets, stirring up trouble. Your blabbering does nothing but give excuses for the Germans to arrest and kill Jews. Do you understand? *(Exit Varga angrily)*

Scene 11

Offices of the Jewish Community. Stern, Freudiger. Enter Varga.

- Varga: *(Rushing to Stern, brandishing a newspaper)* What is the meaning of this notice, sir? What does it mean that "All instructions given by the Germans should be carried out promptly and most conscientiously." If they tell us to get on the train to Auschwitz, we should get on?
- Stern: This is the official newspaper of the community. Do you think that in it we can print a notice not to obey the Germans?
- Varga: If you hadn't set up the Judenrat, you wouldn't have to publish this paper in the first place, and you wouldn't have to tell people to obey the Germans.
- Stern: We set up a Central Council, not a Judenrat, Varga.
- Varga: A Judenrat. Judenrat. I want to call this abomination by its name.
- Stern: We have set up a Central Council. And we have elected its members, Varga. This is not Poland. I specifically requested that our council not be called Judenrat in order to emphasize its independence.

- Varga: Independence? "Only strict adherence to German instructions will ensure the continuation of our existence." Allow me to ask you, sir, is this what you call independence? This is surrender.
- Stern: What would you have done in my place, Varga? If I had refused to head the council, they would have appointed somebody else. Believe me, Varga, with my poor health and at my age, I would have been glad to retire. But then they would have picked someone with a lot less experience, and certainly with a lot fewer connections in the right places, than I have. This Central Council is the lesser of two evils. We must obey the Germans until the new Hungarian government begins to function. In Poland, there was simply no government. Here we do have one, and it will protect us from the Germans as it would protect all Hungarian citizens.
- Varga: The Hungarian government will not protect us. No government in any state has protected a single Jew. We must protect ourselves. Get hold of weapons and go underground.
- Stern: I'm warning you, Varga. Provocation against the Germans is sheer madness. Stop spreading such ideas.
- Varga: *(To Freudiger)* Sir, you have to talk to your rabbis. They should warn people in the synagogues about the German plans, explain to them about Auschwitz and the gas chambers.
- Freudiger: How can one explain things like that, Varga? And who would believe it? Is it possible to believe? We know they stopped operating the gas chambers a year and a half ago.
- Stern: Rumors, nothing but rumors. There is no confirmation of any of these rumors. Besides, they have nothing to do with us.
- Varga: The world is going up in flames, and you want me to be quiet? Those who don't know, the ignorant, will get on the trains to Auschwitz like sheep. Just as it happened in Poland and Slovakia. No, I'll take to the streets by myself and scream Auschwitz! Auschwitz! I won't let you hide the truth. I hereby declare war on the Judenrat, sir, and on you personally. *(Exit. Music. Varga meets a man on the street)* The rebels in the Warsaw ghetto held out for a month and a half. They were just a few hundred against ten thousand Germans. There are hundreds of thousands of us here, and the Germans have no more divisions to send against us... *(Man leaves, Varga meets a second man)* Silence makes you an accessory to murder, don't you understand? If you don't do something, you are responsible for everything that happens here. A terrible

Holocaust... We must let them know, sound the alarm, shout it from every corner, otherwise the guilt will be ours, too. *(Second man moves on. Varga returns to his apartment, pulls a revolver out of his pocket. Simultaneously, two uniformed and one civilian policeman enter. The civilian points to the second man. One of the uniformed police asks the second man to come along. The argument is not heard, but second man refuses. A policeman drags him along by force. As they leave the stage, a shot, Varga's suicide, is heard)*

Scene 12

Offices of the Jewish Community. Wisliceny and Freudiger.

Wisliceny: You do read Hebrew, don't you, Herr Freudiger?

Freudiger: Yes, sir...

Wisliceny: *(Handing Freudiger a letter)* Translate this into a civilized language, will you...

Freudiger: *(Surprised)* It's addressed to me...

Wisliceny: That's why I've brought it to you. You know the Chief Rabbi of Slovakia, right? He's asked me to deliver this to you personally... Go on, read it...

Freudiger: *(Reads)* "Hauptsturmführer Wisliceny, who stopped the Jewish transports from Slovakia to Auschwitz, is now working with us on a plan to save all the Jews of Europe... for a ransom... It is possible to work with him and save the Jews of Hungary, too..."

Wisliceny: What do you say to that, Herr Freudiger?

Freudiger: This is something well worth considering, sir. A very serious offer. We are very interested in such a plan.

Wisliceny: Interest alone is not enough for me, Freudiger. I want cooperation.

Freudiger: But of course, sir. Cooperating in a rescue mission is our duty.

Wisliceny: We want two million dollars.

Freudiger: Two million?

Wisliceny: For starters, of course. Get your people to start collecting the money, and I'll be in touch with you. *(With a lighter he sets the letter on fire)* You realize, of course, that the Hungarians mustn't know about this. They don't understand anything about such deals... *(Blackout)*

Scene 13

Kastner's apartment. Freudiger, Kastner, and Komoly.

Kastner: *(Seeing Freudiger to the door)* I hope we'll be able to give you an answer within a day or two, sir.

Freudiger: I'd like an answer by tonight, if possible. *(Addressing both Kastner and Komoly)* The Judenrat meets tomorrow. If you're going to be part of this deal, you'll have to be at that meeting.

Komoly: We'll do our best, sir.

Freudiger: I'll hear from you then tonight. *(Exit)*

Komoly: *(Aggressive)* Why lead him on, Rezső? We're not getting into this deal.

Kastner: You can't dismiss a deal like that out of hand.

Komoly: We know some Judenrat leaders, Zionists, too, in Poland, who got similar offers from the Germans, and gradually started to collaborate. I don't want to find myself in a few weeks on the same railway platform with Eichmann, deciding for him who gets on the train to Auschwitz and who stays alive.

Kastner: Maybe this same Wisliceny who was ready to save one third of Slovakia's Jews would be willing to do more here? And even if he could save only one third, wouldn't that be worth it?

Komoly: If he really means to save anybody, the Judenrat will come to terms with him. Why should we get involved?

Kastner: Because at the moment we can't do anything else.

Komoly: Why not make a deal with the Hungarians who have supported...

Kastner: All the Hungarians who have supported us are already in Dachau or Mauthausen. The new Hungarian government will do nothing to protect us.

Komoly: We can smuggle people into Romania, give out forged papers, hide people in bunkers. We could...

Kastner: That's absurd, Otto. Continuing to smuggle three or four people a week to Romania won't amount to much.

Komoly: Let's step up the tempo.

Kastner: If we want to rescue people on a large scale, we have to talk to the Germans. No getting around that. And you shouldn't let Freudiger do the job. You have to talk to them.

- Komoly: Don't underestimate Freudiger, Rezső. He's proved himself to be pretty good at deals like that.
- Kastner: At most, Freudiger will save his own family, and maybe a few other religious ones close to him. He couldn't cope with a serious, major rescue operation. You have to take the initiative.
- Komoly: I can't talk to the Germans, Rezső. I'm just not cut out for it. How can I face a German like Wisliceny? His hands are still dripping with the blood of Greek and Yugoslav Jews. He did all the dirty work for Eichmann in Poland, too. I can't talk to a murderer like that.
- Kastner: I've got an idea, Otto. What if we approached the Germans unofficially? I would do it, not you. Just to find out what their true intentions are. If I see that they're serious, then you'll join in.
- Komoly: And if they're not?
- Kastner: Then we break off contacts with them. But at least we'd have gained some time. And time works for us. This war will be over in a few months.
- Komoly: Don't be naive, Rezső. Making contacts is easy. Breaking them off afterwards is what's really hard.
- Kastner: The committee wouldn't be involved at all. I'd endanger only myself, Otto. You know I can handle such risks.
- Komoly: And how would you explain later to Freudiger and Stern that we acted behind their backs?
- Kastner: If they see that we helped to implement their own plan, they'll ask no questions. (*Blackout*)

Scene 14

An interrogation room of the Hungarian Police. Enter Endre, Baky, and Freudiger.

- Endre: (*To Freudiger*) Sit down. (*Freudiger sits down. Bloodcurdling screams are heard from outside where other prisoners are being tortured*) We could use similar methods with you, too, Freudiger... Unless you're ready to be a little more cooperative.
- Freudiger: I'll cooperate in any way you want me to.
- Endre: Good. In that case, perhaps you can tell us what you were doing in the offices of the SS on the twenty-third of March, at nine in the morning?

- Freudiger: I went there to ask for the release of my brother, Moritz, who was put in prison in Kistarcsa.
- Endre: Who did you see?
- Freudiger: Hauptsturmführer Wisliceny.
- Baky: Why was he in such a hurry to release your brother?
- Freudiger: I explained to him that my brother's arrest seriously affects the work at our textile plant, and the financial loss to the State would be very great.
- Endre: And you really believe that Wisliceny cares about the financial loss to Hungary caused by the arrest of your brother? Wisliceny cares only about the SS. And about himself.
- Freudiger: That's all I told him, sir.
- Endre: Let me suggest to you an alternate scenario. We have already seen the Germans' penchant for making financial deals with Jews. A week ago, for example, Manfred Weiss transferred his steel plants to the SS, and yesterday his whole family miraculously turned up in Portugal. Hungarian property worth billions has found its way into German hands. That is the great financial loss to Hungary, Freudiger.
- Freudiger: Indeed it is, sir.
- Endre: Perhaps you'd tell me who the Freudiger brothers mean to transfer their textile plant to?
- Freudiger: God forbid. How can you think of such a thing, sir?
- Baky: Don't try to be wise with us, Freudiger! Wisliceny didn't release your brother for nothing. What did you give him?
- Freudiger: Nothing, sir.
- Baky: Did you promise him anything?
- Freudiger: I told him that if my brother weren't released, I'd have to resign from the Judenrat and run the textile plant.
- Baky: And you want us to believe that Wisliceny worries more about the Judenrat than about his own pocket?
- Freudiger: That's what he said.
- Endre: And what do you say?
- Freudiger: It's possible that he wants to maintain a good working relationship with me and the Judenrat.

Baky: Why would Wisliceny need good working relationships with you, goddamn it? You think we're idiots? He can string you up any time he wants to.

Freudiger: God forbid!

Endre: I want a more logical answer from you, Freudiger. Why would Wisliceny want good working relations with you?

Freudiger: As I've said, to improve the relationship between us in general...

Endre: *(Motions to Baky. Exit Baky)* You'll have a whole night to think about improving your relationship with the SS. I'll also give you somebody to commiserate with. *(Baky returns, dragging a prisoner, tortured and covered with blood, nearly beyond recognition. Baky throws the prisoner at Freudiger's feet)*

Freudiger: *(After a few seconds)* Moritz ... Moritz... *(Blackout)*

Scene 15

In his private room, Eichmann is sitting on a chair; Helmut is shaving him.

Eichmann: Budapest is the only city in Europe where you can still go to a nightclub. The trouble is, Helmut, we don't have much time to enjoy luxury.

Helmut: Yes, sir.

Eichmann: You know we're losing the war, don't you, Helmut.

Helmut: Yes, sir.

Eichmann: Have you ever thought about the reason why we're losing?

Helmut: Yes, sir.

Eichmann: Let's hear your conclusions, Helmut.

Guard: Heil Hitler! *(Krumey enters the SS office and waits for Eichmann)*

Helmut: It's the Hungarians' fault, and the Italians'. Their armies are too weak, sir.

Eichmann: You're wrong, Helmut. It's your fault.

Helmut: Mine, sir?

Eichmann: That's right, Helmut. Yours and everybody else's who think like you, that it's not our fault.

Helmut: I don't understand what you mean, sir.

- Eichmann: Helmut, Helmut, if you weren't my nephew I'd send you to the Eastern Front so fast. You haven't the slightest sense of humor.
(*Enter Guard, tells Helmut about Krumei*)
- Helmut: Obersturmbannführer Krumei, sir.
- Eichmann: Tell him to wait. (*Wipes his face, enters his office*)
- Krumei: I'm sorry to disturb you at this hour, Obersturmbannführer, but we've just got a call from a Jew named Kastner.
- Eichmann: Kastner?
- Krumei: Yes. He's a member of the Zionist Rescue Committee.
- Eichmann: Yes, yes, I remember. He's what's-his-name's assistant... Komoly. What does he want?
- Krumei: He wants to know if we'd be ready to negotiate with them about softening the measures taken against the Jews, in return for material gains.
- Eichmann: He doesn't know about our offer to Freudiger?
- Krumei: Yes, he does, but he chooses to ignore it. That's why I thought I'd better tell you, sir.
- Eichmann: You've been with me long enough, Hermann. Think for yourself. He wants to upset our deal with Freudiger, this Kastner? Or maybe he wants a separate deal for the Zionists?
- Krumei: I'm not sure, sir. The Zionists are only about 5 percent of the Jewish population, but we could make use of their contacts with the Jewish Agency in Istanbul and with the British.
- Eichmann: That doesn't interest me that much, Hermann. You haven't answered my question. Are they coming to us now to cover up some brewing disturbance, like the one we had in Warsaw, or because they swallowed our bait and think that we want their money?
- Krumei: That's what I meant, sir. We should find out what their real intentions are. I've been trying to guess...
- Eichmann: No guessing, Hermann. We must know. We have to learn their particular ways of thinking. This is not the first time we've dealt with Zionists. In the Bialystok ghetto, for example, they did a pretty good job for us. In the Vilna ghetto, they helped us organize the transports.
- Krumei: Apropos of transports, sir, I suggest we act with moderation. Allow me to remind you of Reichsführer Himmler's plan, which we're

- supposed to be carrying out. I'm sure he will want to keep some Jews in reserve for the negotiations with the British and the Americans. May I also remind you, sir, of the situation at the front.
- Eichmann: It's unbelievable, Hermann, isn't it? We throw these Zionists a few extra privileges, maybe a few gifts, and they'll set up ghettos for us, load their fellow Jews on the trains, even throw them into the gas chambers. It's going to be our greatest success... *(To Helmut)* Now do you understand, Helmut, why Germany is going to be defeated in this war?
- Helmut: No, sir. Not exactly... But I'm thinking about it.
- Eichmann: Because some Germans are not dedicated to the Führer's vision, that's why. *(To Krume)* Call in Kastner for tomorrow. We must act fast. *(Blackout)*

Scene 16

Kastner's apartment. Morning. At the table Kastner is preparing several lists. Enter Bogyo.

- Bogyo: How do you like that? No rolls this morning. They closed the grocery. It's terrible. Soon there will be no Jewish stores open in the city.
- Kastner: We can eat bread. Lots of people would be grateful for a few crumbs.
- Bogyo: You know that non-Jewish stores won't sell us on credit anymore, don't you? Make me something to drink, please. Oh, what a scatterbrain I am, I forgot to tell you. A cousin of mine was looking for you yesterday.
- Kastner: *(Preparing something for her to drink)* What did he want?
- Bogyo: He wants to go to Cluj. To hide out there, near the border. Maybe you can help him.
- Kastner: He's old enough to buy himself a train ticket, isn't he? *(Gets up)* Where is my lighter, damn it?
- Bogyo: Where are you going? Here it is.
- Kastner: I've got a meeting.
- Bogyo: But I thought we were going to the Romanian Embassy today.
- Kastner: I won't have time for that today. I'm taking a few of your cigarettes.

Bogyo: I thought we said today.

Kastner: This is a very important meeting. We'll go tomorrow.

Bogyo: I don't want to meddle in your affairs, but why is it so important?

Kastner: I have to meet Otto.

Bogyo: Maybe it can be postponed. *(Goes to the telephone)* I'll ask him.

Kastner: No point asking him. *(Takes receiver from her)* He doesn't know yet that I'm going to meet him.

Bogyo: Great. In that case, don't meet him and come with me.

Kastner: No, no. Joel knows. Joel was supposed to let him know last night, but couldn't find him, and I don't know if he's managed to get hold of him this morning. That's why Otto doesn't know. Maybe.

Bogyo: Rezső, are you hiding something from me? I don't like this at all. What's bothering you? And since when do you eat only chocolate for breakfast? You'll ruin yourself this way. Your hands are shaking.

Kastner: Yes, chocolate is a dangerous thing. See how many Jews die because they eat chocolate.

Bogyo: I won't let you off the hook. I'm just going to change, and we're going to the Romanian Embassy. After that you'll go to any meeting you want to. *(Exit to an inner room. Kastner walks over to the next scene in the offices of the SS)*

Scene 17

Offices of the SS. Enter Krumei, Wisliceny, Kastner, and Brand.

Krumei: What is it exactly that you want from us, Kastner?

Kastner: We would like, Herr Obersturmbannführer, to extend the scope of the offer Hauptsturmführer Wisliceny has made to Freudiger, and to work out a plan together...

Krumei: *(Cutting him off)* Whom exactly do you represent here, Kastner? Freudiger?

Kastner: The Jewish Community, Herr Obersturmbannführer.

Krumei: It seems to me that Freudiger represents the Jewish Community. As far as I can see, Kastner, you represent only the Zionists.

Kastner: We are working together toward the same goal, Herr Obersturmbannführer, in mutual cooperation...

- Krumey: *(Cutting him off)* Mutual cooperation is not representation, Kastner. There is no point in talking to you so long as you represent only yourselves, right, Dieter?
- Wisliceny: Absolutely. My impression was that Freudiger represented the Jewish Community very convincingly.
- Kastner: Your plan, Herr Hauptsturmführer, can be carried out only by people experienced in organization and with the appropriate contacts that could...
- Krumey: What kind of contacts do you have, if I may ask?
- Kastner: We have the closest ties with the World Zionist Federation, the JOINT...
- Brand: Sir, you probably know about our contacts with the Rescue Committee of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul.
- Wisliceny: We're talking about ransom, gentlemen. You think your international connections could produce money, too?
- Kastner: Of course, sir.
- Wisliceny: How much?
- Kastner: The entire sum you've asked for, sir. Two million dollars.
- Wisliceny: For starters, don't forget.
- Krumey: Good. In that case, we'll give you a chance to prove your competence in money matters.
- Kastner: Will one hundred thousand, as an advance, prove our competence?
- Wisliceny: Two hundred thousand. Ten percent. As in any business deal.
- Kastner: Very well. Two hundred thousand.
- Wisliceny: Within a week. The rest in equal payments on the first of every month.
- Krumey: In dollars, Kastner. I want to be sure those connections you've mentioned really work. And I want the dollars from Washington, not the black markets of Budapest.
- Brand: That might take two weeks, even three, sir. If you're willing to accept pengős⁴, we can pay you in a week.
- Krumey: I can wait another week. Dollars, please.
- Kastner: Of course, sir.
- Krumey: Good. Will you have something to drink? *(Servant offers drinks)* To the Führer's health! To the Reich! *(They drink)*

⁴ Hungarian currency

- Kastner: We've brought along a memo, sir. (*Brand takes a document from his briefcase*) In return for our payments, we'd like you to guarantee that Hungary's Jews will not be kept in ghettos or sent to camps like Auschwitz, and to allow the emigration of Jews who possess appropriate visas.
- Krumey: No need for such a memorandum. As long as the payments reach us on time, we won't ask the Hungarians to set up ghettos or send Jews to camps. Unless the Hungarians act on their own initiative. In which case we can't stop them, of course.
- Kastner: Nevertheless, sir, I'd like very much to have these promises in writing.
- Wisliceny: You'll get nothing in writing until we see the money.
- Kastner: Herr Hauptsturmführer, a commitment in writing would make it a lot easier for me to gain authorization for our future negotiations.
- Krumey: Well, now, Kastner! Here I was, naively thinking that your extensive contacts gave you enough authority. Now I see that you need my written word, right? Kastner, I'm not interested in people whose authority comes from my written word. Lots of those around. (*Pause*) When you bring the money, you get the guarantees.
- Kastner: Am I to understand, sir, that until then there will be no turn for the worse in the situation of the Jews?
- Krumey: That's correct. So long as the matter depends on us. (*He indicates that the conversation is about to end*)
- Brand: What about the emigration of Jews with valid visas, sir?
- Krumey: I'll check on that with Berlin. It doesn't seem to me impossible to allow such emigration. To neutral countries only, of course. Is that clear? (*Blackout*)

Scene 18

The entrance to Kastner's apartment.

- Kastner: Send the report to the Jewish Agency in Istanbul first thing in the morning.
- Brand: We're meeting Stern in the morning, aren't we?
- Kastner: I'll see him alone. It's most important that the report goes out in the morning. (*Exeunt*)

Scene 19

Krumey, Wisliceny, Baky, and Hungarian Policemen are standing in front of Budapest's central synagogue.

- Baky: *(Trying unsuccessfully to open the door)* This isn't a synagogue, it's a fortress. What are these locks for, goddamn it?! Locking their synagogue like a jail. *(He loses his patience, motions to a policeman, who breaks the glass in the door)*
- Krumey: *(Failing to stop the policeman)* Just a minute. Pity. Such beautiful stained glass.
- Baky: Plenty more like that in the windows... *(They enter the synagogue)* You can fit at least twenty cars and fifty motorcycles in here. The horses you can put in the rear wing.
- Wisliceny: I want this opening widened a little. The Daimler won't get through the door. *(A policeman comes out of the synagogue dragging along an old man covered with blood)*
- Policeman: *(To Baky)* He cursed my mother, sir. *(Blackout)*

Scene 20

Offices of the Jewish Community. Stern, Freudiger, Komoly, and Kastner.

- Stern: *(To Komoly, indicating Kastner)* He shouldn't have negotiated with them about ransom. That's a matter of life and death. We must be extremely careful about that. It's unthinkable that anybody who feels like it just goes ahead and discusses matters of life and death with the Germans. *(To Kastner)* As far as I'm concerned, any agreement you've made with the Germans that wasn't in my name, has no validity whatsoever.
- Kastner: But of course I acted in your name, sir. I specifically told them that anything I had agreed upon with them would have to be approved by you.
- Stern: But who authorized you to tell them that?
- Kastner: It was the Germans who suggested the deal, Baron Stern, and I seized the opportunity to further our common cause. I had no intention of doing anything behind your back. It is a fact, is it not, that we are here right now, discussing the future steps to be taken in the negotiations.
- Komoly: Baron Stern, let's assume that Kastner has made a mistake. A mistake that I may have had something to do with as well. But

ultimately, he's achieved a lot. I suggest you reconsider your stand, sir.

Stern: There's nothing to reconsider. Things are very clear. Who are you to act in my name, Kastner? Even if you did achieve something, you've also seriously damaged the authority of the Community's leadership.

Freudiger: With your permission, sir, this isn't the time for hairsplitting... Personally, I don't think one can blame Kastner. I couldn't have obtained better terms myself. True, it wasn't exactly proper not to consult with us in advance, but that doesn't negate the agreement Kastner has reached with the Germans. *(Stern does not reply)*

Komoly: I promise you, sir, that we've learned our lesson from this misunderstanding and will act properly in the future.

Freudiger: Fine. That's fine with me. Shoy⁵. Let's be grateful for what's been accomplished and start collecting the money.

Stern: The money will be ready the day after tomorrow.

Komoly: *(Shakes Stern's hand)* Good-bye. *(Exit)*

Kastner: *(To Stern)* I'll be at your office, sir, the day after tomorrow, first thing in the morning. *(Exit)*

Stern: Philip, make sure everything Kastner does is coordinated with you. You'll go with him to the Germans. I want you to be a full partner in every phase of the negotiations.

Freudiger: With your permission, sir, it would be better if Kastner went to them alone. He is right, you know, with the Germans one must deal in devious ways. It seems to me that he is better versed in these ways than I am. I don't understand the Germans. Kastner speaks fluent German. When I speak to them in Yiddish, they claim I soil the purity of their language. *(Blackout)*

Scene 21

Kastner's apartment. Enter Kastner. There is no one at home.

Kastner: Bogyo?... *(No reply)* Bogyo?... *(Worried. Goes to phone. Dials. Waits. Puts receiver down. Pause. Door opens. Enter Helen and Bogyo)* Where have you been?

Bogyo: You'd better tell us where you've been all day. We've looked for you all over the place. *(Helen sits down, exhausted)* I'll bring you a

⁵ OK in Yiddish

glass of water, Helen. *(To Kastner)* Why do I have to get so nervous about you every day? Where have you been for a whole day?

Kastner: I told you I was going to be busy. *(Exit Bogyo)* What's wrong, Mother?

Bogyo: *(From the kitchen)* You told me you'd come with me to the Romanian Embassy.

Helen: She made me go with her to the Embassy. Don't ask what went on there. There must have been three hundred people there, yelling and screaming, crying, pushing and shoving... Four hours we waited in line. People were going mad. Somebody wanted to rob me.

Kastner: What can they still rob from you?

Helen: My ring. One of the clerks wanted me to sell it to him for five pengős. I paid six hundred for it thirty years ago. "They'll confiscate it, anyway," he said. *(Points to her necklace)* He wanted this, too. And the earrings. Given half a chance, he probably would have wanted my gold teeth. *(Bogyo returns with a drink)*

Bogyo: We waited five hours before they let us in. And then that idiot clerk said that nothing could be done for us without you. "A woman can't leave without her husband." So, if you had been there, as you promised, we'd have our visas by now.

Kastner: We'll just have to put these visas on hold. I couldn't tell you this morning, but a lot of things are happening. We'll have to stay. There's been a very important development today. I can't afford to leave now.

Bogyo: And I can't afford to stay. Just looking out the windows gives me shivers. Jews are being thrown out of their jobs, stores are being closed. What are we waiting for?

Kastner: What are we waiting for? I'll tell you what. If we don't stay here, a lot worse things than closing stores will happen. Total liquidation. Like in Poland. I don't think you'd be happy with the knowledge that I could have prevented such a liquidation and I chose to run away to Romania...

Bogyo: *(Very angry)* What is it that you can prevent? Who are you, anyway, to think that you can prevent anything? You can't even look after your own wife and elderly mother who need your help.

Helen: Why are you shouting? All you need is for your neighbors to hear you want to run away and then report you. That would be better?

(To Kastner) Try to calm her down, will you? *(To Bogyo)* The last war was a lot worse, and still here we are, alive... *(Suddenly, air raid sirens are heard, then planes overhead, and bombs. Bogyo is frightened)*

Kastner: *(Soothing Bogyo)* If these are Russian bombers, that means they're on their way here. Let's get down to the shelter... *(Blackout)*

Scene 22

Offices of the Jewish Community. Stern is at his desk. Enter Endre accompanied by a policeman.

Endre: I guess you toasted the American bombers last night, didn't you, sir?

Stern: I had no reason to celebrate. All the windows in my house were shattered.

Endre: I am truly sorry about that, sir, but if you had lived in a Jewish neighborhood, you would have been unharmed.

Stern: What are you insinuating, sir?

Endre: I'll bet some enterprising members of your Community marked out all the Jewish neighborhoods for the Americans to miss.

Stern: That's an unfounded accusation, sir. We are all Hungarian citizens and have nothing whatsoever to do with the Americans.

Endre: And we happen to have proof to the contrary. Therefore, the government has decided to take over five hundred Jewish apartments in which to house those unfortunates who got hurt in the bombings. As a gesture of goodwill, we'll let you prepare the list of apartments.

Stern: This is strictly against the law, sir. We shall turn to the court this very day.

Endre: I have thirty thousand homeless Hungarians on my hands. The court will favor us.

Stern: What are you implying, sir? That Jews are not Hungarians? That they need no homes? That they don't get wet in the rain? What law allows confiscation of Jewish apartments, sir?

Endre: I know you well enough, sir. You'll look out for the welfare of your Jews. You've always known how to take care of your own. Even at the expense of others. I want the list by two o'clock.

Stern: Sir, I demand a written order from the Interior Minister. Does Admiral Horthy know about this? I'm sure he wouldn't allow it.

Endre: I don't think we should trouble the Admiral with such trivial matters. The list at two o'clock. Five hundred apartments. Good morning. *(Exit)*

Scene 23

Kastner's apartment. Morning. Kastner and Bogyo.

Kastner: I'll be back at six. Hopefully, not later.

Bogyo: Would it be too much to ask you to call me before you go in to see them?

Kastner: I don't know. There's no public phone at the Gestapo.

Bogyo: Do you ever think about me when you're with them?

Kastner: No. But you can take comfort in the fact that I don't even think about myself when I'm with them. I can't wear this tie. It's got a stain on it.

Bogyo: *(Angry)* Maybe you shouldn't go then. Why do you have to go all the time? Are you their messenger boy? Let Freudiger go.

Kastner: *(Even angrier)* All right. I won't go. *(Sits down)* What now? Is this what you want me to do? Sit in the house all day? I want to understand. You want me to sit at home all day pretending that nothing's happening out there? *(Knocking at the door. Kastner recognizes Brand's signal, motions to Bogyo, who opens the door)*

Brand: Good morning, Bogyo.

Bogyo: Good morning.

Brand: Good morning, Rezső.

Kastner: Lovely morning.

Bogyo: Would you like some coffee?

Brand: Yes, thank you. I have to talk to you, Rezső...

Kastner: Go ahead, I'm listening. *(Brand hesitates)*

Bogyo: Don't mind me, Joel. I don't understand what there is to talk about so much, anyway. *(Exit to kitchen. Pause)*

Brand: I was at Otto's last night. I don't think he knows exactly what happened with the Germans. And I gathered from him that Stern and Freudiger don't know either.

- Kastner: Of course they do. I told them about it myself.
- Brand: In a very ambiguous way. Why play a double game with them, too?
- Kastner: Don't try to teach me how to conduct negotiations. I had to get the money from them.
- Brand: Rezső, this isn't poker. You know what this agreement is all about. Krumei said that if the Hungarians decided to set up ghettos, the Germans wouldn't be able to stop them. You didn't tell anybody about that.
- Kastner: I know exactly what Krumei said, you don't have to remind me.
- Brand: But I do, because I'm worried. I think that Wisliceny and Krumei are making a private deal with us. Maybe the money goes right into their own pockets? That's why they can't stop the Hungarians.
- Kastner: A very interesting thought, Joel. Too bad you don't take it a tiny step further.
- Brand: Well, look, tonight they've confiscated five hundred apartments from us and Krumei did nothing to stop them. I suppose the Yellow Star was originally a Hungarian idea, too!
- Kastner: If Eichmann is present at this meeting, then the deal won't be such a private deal with Krumei.
- Brand: Eichmann?
- Kastner: Yes, Eichmann. If he...
- Brand: Have you gone out of your mind, Rezső? We shouldn't go anywhere near Eichmann. He's not a man we can talk to. He can shoot you just for coughing.
- Kastner: We have to go to him and try not to cough.
- Brand: Be reasonable, Rezső. I do admire your courage, really, but this isn't courage. It's plain idiocy. And, with all due respect, I don't believe you can get to him.
- Kastner: If you won't hold me up here too long, I'll get to him. It is Eichmann who decides the fate of Hungary's Jews. If he is a party to the agreement, we can ask him to make the Hungarians honor it.
- Brand: All right, let's assume you get to see him. What will you tell him about the ninety thousand dollars we are short? With Krumei, we could possibly work something out. Eichmann is not Krumei. When he finds out that nearly half the sum is lacking, he'll blow up the whole deal.

- Kastner: About the money, I've got at least seventeen different answers for Eichmann. But first, we have to make sure he comes to the meeting. And you, instead of wasting your energies on blaming me, would do better to come back here at two o'clock and help me pick out the best answer.
- Brand: What if Eichmann doesn't like any of your answers? I won't take that responsibility on myself alone. Let's go talk to Otto. We'll postpone the meeting with the Germans. We'll also consult Stern and Freudiger. They have every right to know what we're doing with their money.
- Kastner: You can consult anyone you like. I won't. And I won't postpone the meeting, either. I'm going to meet Eichmann. With you, or without you. *(Exit Brand)*
- Bogyo: *(Enters)* What's going on? What was that shouting about?
- Kastner: Good-bye... *(Exit. We see Brand getting drunk in his apartment)*

Scene 24

Krumey and Stern in the offices of the Jewish Community.

- Krumey: *(Hands Stern a list)* I want all these people to report to the Central Railway Station tomorrow morning at ten o'clock sharp. It would be best if their families did not accompany them. The station will be crowded enough without them. And another thing, Baron, this time we'll have no excuses or evasions. Eight hundred people. At Krupp Industries they need every one of them. We'll personally take care of anyone who doesn't show up. Is that clear?
- Stern: Yes, sir.
- Krumey: Heil Hitler! *(Stern hesitantly raises his hand, does not repeat the words. Exit Krumey)*
- Stern: *(To audience)* I didn't make up the list, I was only the mailman. They could have delivered the orders themselves. And if not them, then the Hungarian Police, who would have been glad to call up even more. Not eight hundred, maybe a thousand... or thousands... not to mention those whom they would have "injured by accident" while delivering the orders. I had no illusions about Krupp Industries. What would lawyers, accountants, doctors, journalists, actors, and opera singers do in a Krupp plant? Did Krupp have the time to turn them into steel workers? The war was about to end. What was I to do? Refuse to deliver the orders and leave these

people, and many others, at the mercy of the Germans? Or turn in those on this list and thereby delay, even if for a little while, the calling up of others? Common sense could supply no answers to these questions... A moral sense? In the name of what morality could anyone call on “moral sense” in those days?

Scene 25

A café in Budapest. Kastner and Wisliceny are playing cards and drinking beer.

Wisliceny: That would mean a great effort on my part.

Waiter: *(Enters)* Would you like anything else?

Wisliceny: Bring me a cream puff, an apple strudel, and ice cream...

Waiter: And for you, sir?

Kastner: Nothing, thank you... *(Exit Waiter)* Five hundred dollars.

Wisliceny: Obersturmbannführer Eichmann is not an easy man. Very hard to convince. Besides, he's very busy.

Kastner: Eight hundred. The meeting will take place, anyway. All I ask is that Obersturmbannführer Eichmann be present.

Wisliceny: You have no idea how difficult it would be to ask him to come.

Kastner: A thousand dollars.

Wisliceny: And what am I supposed to say to Obersturmbannführer Krume? He'd be insulted. He'd think that he wasn't good enough for you.

Kastner: Obersturmbannführer Krume? knows very well that without Obersturmbannführer Eichmann, the deal can't go forward.

Wisliceny: I just can't, Kastner. There are things you don't understand. Not everybody in the SS is as good to you as I am.

Kastner: That's why we've come to you, sir. Because of your special relationship to us. You, sir, are clear-minded, understanding... Twelve hundred now, and another five hundred after the meeting.

Wisliceny: It's a pleasure doing business with you, Kastner. Eichmann will be at the meeting. *(Enter Waiter with refreshments. Hands Wisliceny a small plate with the bill on it)*

Waiter: The bill, sir. *(Wisliceny pushes the plate toward Kastner)*

Wisliceny: Thanks for the treat, Kastner. *(Fade to black)*

Scene 26

Brand in his apartment, alone, drunk. Enter Hansi.

Brand: Where have you been?

Hansi: At Rezső's. What are you still doing here?

Brand: Waiting for you.

Hansi: For me? You should be at Rezső's, with the money.

Brand: I won't go to Rezső until I talk to Otto. And I want you to come with me.

Hansi: There's no time for talking, Joel. You've got to meet the Germans in an hour and a half. Look at yourself. You've got stains all over your shirt.

Brand: I understand he couldn't get Eichmann to come.

Hansi: You're wrong. He bribed Wisliceny, and Wisliceny will take care of Eichmann.

Brand: I don't believe it. This man is simply... And you... you don't care that I'm going to Eichmann with only half the money?

Hansi: Rezső has a few ideas. And he wants to talk to you about them. Have some coffee before you go. You stink of cognac. *(Exit to kitchen)*

Brand: *(Calls after her)* He's always got ideas, Rezső does. If he thinks Eichmann will be as excited about those ideas as you are, then he is sadly mistaken. When Eichmann finds out we don't have all the money, he'll put a bullet in our heads before listening to a single idea of Rezső's. Rezső and his ideas. He's also told Otto that the Germans were willing to issue emigration permits. That's a lie. They're willing only to talk about it. But that is Rezső's idea.

Hansi: *(Has in the meantime returned with a cup of coffee)* Stop wasting time, Joel. Maybe Rezső was wrong, and the two of you should have consulted Otto. But these minor points can be settled after the meeting with the Germans. Drink this.

Brand: Minor points? Let the Hungarians set up ghettos and Krumei tell us that he knew nothing about it—is that what you call minor points?

Hansi: All right. You're right, Joel. But don't you see that's exactly the reason why Rezső wants Eichmann to be at this meeting?

Brand: What's the matter with all of you? Since when can one believe that Eichmann will keep his promises?

- Hansi: That's why you should go to the meeting and get a written guarantee.
- Brand: I'm not going. I'm not Rezső's servant. He wants me around when he needs me. When he doesn't need me, he throws me out of his house. He sent me to take care of the mail during the meeting with Stern so he could tell him anything he wanted to.
- Hansi: You're working together. Somebody had to take care of the mail, too.
- Brand: For half an hour I've been trying to explain to you that it's impossible to work with him. Once he makes up his mind, nobody can stop him.
- Hansi: Good! At last we've got somebody who can't be stopped. Somebody who can go to the Germans and talk to them without shaking in his boots. And instead of helping him, you get insulted, polish off a bottle of cognac, and sit around moaning and groaning.
- Brand: And you're shaking in your boots when you talk to him. He's blinded you completely. If he can do anything, as you say he can, then what does he need me for? He told me he'd go to the Germans with me or without me. So let him go without me.
- Hansi: He can't go without you. He knows that and you know that. I'm sure he's very sorry about that outburst of his. Go to him, he needs you.
- Brand: When he needs me, he sends you to make his apologies.
- Hansi: You know Rezső. He can get carried away by his great ideas, and then overlook the one small detail that could bring him down. Come on, get up, he's waiting for you. You have to decide what to tell the Germans about the money. Here's the suitcase. I've ironed the bills we bought on the black market. They look as good as new. I hope they won't suspect anything. And throw some water on your face before you go. (*Hands him the suitcase. Blackout*)

Scene 27

Eichmann, Krumey, Wisliceny, Kastner, and Brand in the offices of the SS.

- Eichmann: I see you've brought the advance.
- Kastner: Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer.

- Eichmann: Good. Good. There's still money left in your safes, eh? Behind paintings, in flowerpots, in the sewage pipes. Those bills should be aired out so they don't stink. Open it.
- Brand: This money got here only yesterday, from Istanbul, sir.
- Wisliceny: Brand new bills, straight from the Government Printing Office in Washington.
- Brand: They're arranged in packets of one thousand dollars each, Herr Obersturmbannführer. There are fifty packets in this suitcase.
- Eichmann: We can dispense with the actual counting, eh? If I were in your place, I'd make no mistake either. Obersturmbannführer Krumey, these people have made extraordinary efforts to obtain this money. Should we reciprocate, eh? What do you say?
- Krumey: By all means, sir. . .
- Eichmann: First of all, we'll relieve you of these. *(Tears off yellow stars)* I get goose bumps when I see yellow stars around me. And, Herr Obersturmbannführer Krumey, I'd also suggest we help Dr. Kastner and Mr. Brand carry out their tasks as efficiently as possible. So, what do you say we let them keep their telephones, yes? And their cars? That would help you a lot, Dr. Kastner, would it not?
- Kastner: Oh, yes. Greatly, Herr Obersturmbannführer.
- Eichmann: *(To Krumey)* Issue the appropriate permits.
- Kastner: Herr Obersturmbannführer, there are a few more people, very helpful to us in these contacts with you. It's hard for them, too, with these stars...
- Eichmann: Submit a list, Kastner. We'll consider each case on its own merits. *(He glances at the suitcase, does a quick calculation in his head)* Fifty thousand in the suitcase... *(Turns to Brand suspiciously)* How much money have you brought, Herr Brand?
- Brand: One hundred and ten thousand, sir.
- Eichmann: You promised two hundred thousand, no?
- Brand: Yes, sir.
- Eichmann: The way I figure it, we're missing ninety thousand dollars. Isn't that right, Hermann?
- Kastner: *(Interferes)* Of course, we've wanted to give you the additional ninety thousand, Herr Obersturmbannführer, but the leaders of the Jewish Agency have refused. They hadn't received from us, after we talked to these gentlemen *(indicating Krumey and Wisliceny)* a

definite guarantee that no ghettos would be set up and no transports would be sent...

Eichmann: But you did receive the word of a German officer, didn't you? The word of an Obersturmbannführer is a word, Kastner. We're not Jews!

Kastner: I don't doubt that, Herr Obersturmbannführer; but contrary to the promises given us, rumors that have reached us from several cities...

Eichmann: *(Cutting him off)* Dr. Kastner! It's you who hasn't kept his promises, not him. *(Points to Krumei)* This fact notwithstanding, Kastner, I'll continue to be fair with you. I won't cancel our deal. And to prove to you my good intentions, I'm giving you a week's extension to come up with the rest of the money. What do you think, Hermann? Can we really afford to be that fair?

Krumei: Yes. I think so, Herr Obersturmbannführer.

Brand: With your permission, sir, the leaders of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul are very worried. They know about the yellow stars and have heard rumors that Jewish houses will be marked yellow, too...

Eichmann: I suggest you don't let rumors guide your actions, Brand. I have just made a rather generous gesture to you, and if our negotiations continue the way we want them to continue, it won't be the last one.

Kastner: *(Insistent)* Herr Obersturmbannführer, I repeat, our people want no gestures, but guarantees that Jews will not be herded into ghettos...

Eichmann: *(Cutting him off, screaming)* Kastner!! *(Pause, Eichmann calms down)* Kastner, you're walking on very thin ice. Don't take advantage of my good heart. I'm offering you two choices: either you take the money and leave right now, or you come back here with the rest within a week. Is that understood?

Kastner: There's another possibility...

Eichmann: I've given you only two!

Kastner: *(Relenting)* Will I get your guarantee in a week?

Eichmann: Our word is a word, Kastner. *(Blackout)*

Scene 28

General Headquarters of the Hungarian Police in Budapest. Gathered in the hall are several hundred officers. Enter Endre and Eichmann.

Endre: Heil Hitler! *(The audience replies)* Gentlemen, Officers of the General Staff. Tonight we mark the beginning of the largest, most comprehensive operation in the history of the Hungarian Police. In only three weeks we shall separate 700,000 Jews from the Hungarian population. In only three weeks we will confiscate all their property amounting to billions of pengős. I promise you that in three weeks, when I'm standing here before you once more, we'll be able to say proudly, "Never have so few Hungarians got rid of so many Jews in so short a time." And now allow me, on this festive occasion, to present to you the man who has initiated this operation and has cooperated with us in every stage of its planning. Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann. *(Tumultuous cheers. Transition to Scene 29)*

Scene 29

Kastner's apartment. Kastner is typing up a report. Bogyo is backstage. The door is forced open. Enter a Sergeant and two Hungarian Policemen.

Sergeant: Hands up!

Kastner: What's going on?

Sergeant: Shut up! *(The Policemen move about the house. One discovers Bogyo asleep. Rudely, he drags her into the room)*

1st Policeman: Stand on your own legs, filth bag!

Kastner: What do you want from her? She's ill.

Sergeant: *(Hits Kastner with the butt of his pistol)* I told you to shut your trap, didn't I? *(Bogyo is stunned)*

1st Policeman: You get your hands up, too! *(Bogyo raises her hands. Policeman shoves her toward Kastner)*

Bogyo: Rezső...

Sergeant: *(Hits her)* Shut up! *(Policemen finish their search)*

2nd Policeman: Nobody else. Just them two.

Sergeant: Check out everything. The floors. They probably hid them under the floor, the pigs.

Kastner: There must be a mistake, sir. You've got the wrong apartment.

Sergeant: Will you shut up!

Kastner: Excuse me, sir, we're not hiding anybody. I'm Dr. Kastner...

Back to Scene 28

Eichmann: *(Shakes Endre's hand and turns to his audience)* The Führer has personally asked me to convey to you the great admiration he has for you. With your devotion and dedication, you are paving the way toward Hungary's liberation from the Jews. Until now, we have removed them from 180,000 key positions, well-paying jobs, here, in Hungary. Just imagine what would have happened had we delayed. I'm sure that during your upcoming operation you will discover for yourselves that it's the Jews and the Bolsheviks who are responsible for this terrible war. The Red Army wanted to enter your land and be welcomed with open arms by these Jews and Bolsheviks. Luckily, we uncovered the plot in time and took appropriate countermeasures to foil it. Gentlemen, officers of the Police. The success of this operation depends on you, on your carrying it out to the last detail. Well, I admit, I've kept one little detail a secret, only to reveal it to you now, at this great moment. If you keep to the timetable we've set for you, if you succeed, you too will have your share in the confiscated Jewish property. Each and every one of you will get at least 75,000 pengős. *(Blackout)*

Back to Scene 29. Kastner's apartment

1st Policeman: *(Enters, carrying a suitcase)* A packed suitcase. They wanted to run away, or they got guests.

Sergeant: You've been hiding guests from Kistarcsa!

Bogyo: No, no ...the suitcase is ours, sir.

Sergeant: Why is it packed?

Bogyo: We were going to visit my parents.

Sergeant: *(Hits her)* You were going to run away! *(Opens suitcase, spilling its contents to the floor)*

Kastner: It's all a mistake. I'm Dr. Kastner...

Sergeant: *(Kicks him)* Up against the wall! *(Enter Second Policeman)*

2nd Policeman: Nothing.

Sergeant: They got away. Bastards! *(Exeunt Sergeant and Policemen)*

Kastner: *(Bending over Bogyo)* Oh my God, what these animals have done to you! *(Bogyo recovers quickly)*

- Bogyo: We're getting out of here right now. I'm not staying in this house another night. I told you that one day this would happen to us, too. What would I have done if I'd been here all by myself? I don't want this to happen again. You can't make me stay here.
- Kastner: I'm sure they didn't mean us. Just some dumb Hungarian policemen who came to the wrong address, Bogyo. *(He is wiping her face)*
- Bogyo: Don't touch me. And start packing. We're getting out of here right now, and don't think I'm going to pack your suitcase for you, either.
- Kastner: I can't go anywhere now. I've got a meeting at Stern's and this report has to be typed up. I'm late as it is.
- Bogyo: Even if they had killed me just now, you'd still go on typing that report, wouldn't you? If you don't come with me right this minute, I'm going without you.

Blackout in the apartment. We see Bogyo running across the stage with two suitcases. Kastner moves directly over to the offices of the Jewish Community.

Scene 30

Offices of the Jewish Community. Freudiger, Stern, and Kastner are waiting for Komoly and Brand.

- Kastner: Eichmann has explicitly told me that they would reconsider the question of the yellow stars for the whole community. In the meantime, I suggest we prepare a list of those who should get immediate exemption. My feeling is that the good atmosphere at the talks may bring additional practical results.

Enter Komoly and Brand, supporting Miklós Benedek, who seems to be in very poor physical condition.

- Komoly: *(His manner suggests the horror of his message)* The transports have started. One left Kistarcsa last night for Auschwitz. *(Pointing to Benedek)* This is Miklós Benedek. He managed to jump off the train near the German border.
- Stern: This is Benedek? Editor of The Nation?
- Kastner: *(To Benedek)* Can you tell us exactly what happened?

Benedek: They tricked us. Last night, they led us out of the barracks and told us we'd be going to a labor camp. Most people were ready to get on the train. We'd had a very hard month at Kistarcsa. Nobody thought anything could be worse... Some people, who didn't believe we'd be going to a labor camp, refused to get on the train. They lay down on the ground. The police just shot ten or twenty of them; then everybody got on the train. We were shocked. There was a woman in labor. She couldn't stand up. She began giving birth on the platform. The police stood around her, laughing. I asked a Hungarian officer what could this woman do in a labor camp? He said that at her husband's side she could boost his morale... And I believed him... When she gave birth, they kicked her, trying to make her get up. She couldn't move... she was having twins... After she gave birth to the second baby, they grabbed her by the hands and feet and threw her into the freight car... then they threw her babies after her. I don't know how we could have believed them... Nobody even wanted to talk about other possibilities... They were afraid to say the word Auschwitz...

Kastner: How do you know that this train was going to Auschwitz?

Benedek: After about five hours, the train stopped. I heard two Germans talking just outside our wagon. It was clear from their conversation that we were going to Auschwitz, to a "salami factory."

The door bursts open, enter Baky with two Hungarian Policemen.

Baky: *(Approaches Benedek and shoots him at close range)* I should shoot all of you. Hiding escaped prisoners! You too, Baron Stern? I thought you were a Hungarian patriot... *(Blackout)*

Act II

Scene 31

Thunderstorm. Lightning. The home of Dr. Schneller, finance minister of Hungary. Stern is knocking at the door.

Schneller: *(Opens door)* Baron! To be out on such a night!

Stern: I'm terribly sorry to bother you at such a late hour, sir, but I've had no choice. I've been trying to reach you by telephone every day for a whole week, but your clerks have refused to put me through.
(Transition to Scene 32)

Scene 32

Kastner's apartment. Thunder, lightning, rain. Kastner, Komoly, and Brand, all exhausted, are waiting for Hansi. Knocking at the door. Brand rushes to open it. Enter Hansi.

Brand: Hansi... *(Helps her off with her shoes)* Your shoes are full of water.
(Kastner is bringing her a drink)

Kastner: Here. Drink this.

Brand: We didn't know what to think. What happened?

Hansi: We didn't make it. All the messengers have come back from the ghettos... with the money, with the forged papers... everything. Nobody even wants to hear about Auschwitz. People are suffering from hunger... disease... They're overcrowded... they're too weak to listen... They say we're spreading rumors... We? The Hungarians are spreading rumors... The rumor circulating in all the ghettos is that the Hungarians are transferring people to agricultural work in the South. That's more convenient for them to believe. In every ghetto, people are lining up to register... they all want to be the first on those trains... They can't think of Auschwitz at all, and they don't want to escape either. Children and the elderly are afraid they wouldn't make it in the cold, and the younger ones, who could make it to the border, don't want to leave their families... There's nobody to talk to... nobody... We didn't think about this. You were right, Rezső. We have to get back to negotiating with the Germans.

Return to Scene 31.

Schneller: What can I do for you?

Stern: That train out of Kistarcsa, sir. We know it got to Auschwitz.

Schneller: Auschwitz?

Stern: Yes. Somebody who jumped off that train managed to reach us eight days ago.

Schneller: Miklós Benedek. Yes. I did get a report on him. He escaped from a labor camp in Southern Germany. This story about Auschwitz is just his excuse for running away.

Stern: Benedek used to be the editor of The Nation. If he hadn't been telling the truth, the police wouldn't have shot him right in front of our eyes.

Schneller: Benedek was fired from The Nation for disseminating hostile propaganda. And you should have turned him over to the police the moment he got to you.

Stern: The man escaped from Auschwitz. How could we have turned him in?

Schneller: I'm not talking about just this one man. We hear daily rumors about the ever-increasing web of contacts between the Jewish Community and the SS, contacts that you yourself know about and support with money. The government cannot help people who break the law.

Stern: *(Furious)* Is that so? We are breaking the law? And all those operations in the provinces, according to what law are they being carried out? And what law calls for the confiscation of Jewish property? According to which law have all the Jews of Budapest been fired from their jobs? Which law requires the closing of Jewish businesses? According to what law are we to wear the yellow stars? Mr. Minister, Jews are being shot on sight in the streets, without trials. According to what law? And the transports to Auschwitz? According to what law are they being sent? What law? And you dare accuse us of breaking the law?

Schneller: My dear sir. We didn't ask the Germans to invade Hungary. We are not sending the transports to Auschwitz. We are an occupied country. The Germans have sent more Hungarians than Jews to their camps. It's they who set up the new government, and I only take care of this government's money. *(Blackout)*

Scene 33

SS offices. Enter Krumei, Wisliceny, Kastner, and Brand.

Krumey: You can put the suitcases on the table. (*Brand and Kastner are hesitating*)

Wisliceny: What's the matter?

Kastner: Our agreement is still not being carried out properly.

Krumey: What do you mean?

Kastner: I mean that despite all your guarantees, and despite all your promises that those guarantees have some force, despite everything, transports are being sent to Auschwitz.

Krumey: Auschwitz?

Kastner: Yes, Auschwitz.

Krumey: Dear Dr. Kastner, not a single Jew is being sent to Auschwitz. I've told you this several times before. We have absolutely no interest in sending valuable Jewish manpower to Auschwitz when we need it for our war effort elsewhere.

Kastner: Two weeks ago, fifteen hundred Jews were taken from the camp in Kistarcsa and sent to Auschwitz. Who knows how many others have been sent from there to other places.

Wisliceny: Is that what that Benedek has told you, the one who jumped off the train?

Krumey: But you've got letters from them, don't you?

Kastner: Letters?

Krumey: (*To Wisliceny*) You didn't give them the letters?

Wisliceny: I only got them yesterday. (*Takes out a bunch of postcards from a desk drawer*)

Brand: (*Reading*) "We are working and happy here. There is enough to eat." Where were these sent from?

Krumey: It says there. "Waldsee."

Brand: Waldsee?

Krumey: Yes. It's in Southern Germany.

Brand: I've never heard of it.

Kastner: I'd very much like to visit these people and see what they're doing there.

Krumey: There are factories there, and the people are working. Exactly as they've written to you.

Brand: I grew up in Germany. I don't recall a place like that.

Wisliceny: You can look it up on the map. (*He is looking at a map*)

- Krumey: Dr. Kastner, this suspicion is really unnecessary. I can understand your fears. I'm not trying to deny that we, including myself, have not treated the Jews with kid gloves during the last few years. But the situation has changed. There are quite a few people among the SS who no longer support the harsh treatment of Jews. Reichsführer Himmler is behind this new attitude which Dieter and I are representing here.
- Kastner: I'm delighted to hear that the Reichsführer has changed his attitude, but how does it square with the fact that almost all Hungarian Jews are now kept in forty-three ghettos, in shameful and inhuman conditions? That's not exactly a new attitude.
- Krumey: The ghettos have been set up by the Hungarians, Kastner, not by us. They claim that you people are a security risk and must be isolated, so you won't aid the Russians the way you did in 1918.
- Brand: According to the information we have, the SS has taken part in every action of the Hungarians. SS men have supervised and instructed the Hungarians every step of the way.
- Krumey: Hungary is an ally of the Reich against the Russians, Brand, Our presence has been representational only. We've had explicit orders only to be present at these actions.
- Kastner: The explanations we've been getting, sir, may be correct, or, just as easily, incorrect. In Poland, too, Jews were told that they'd be sent to labor camps. If the Reichsführer is indeed behind this new attitude we're hearing so much about, then I'm sure he could easily arrange to have those detainees returned from Waldsee to Hungary.
- Krumey: Hungary is helping German industry with manpower, Kastner. It's a political agreement.
- Kastner: Which means, sir, if I've understood you correctly, that the deportations will continue?
- Krumey: The supply of manpower, according to industry needs, will continue. Even the Reichsführer can't stop that.
- Kastner: In that case, there's no point in having these meetings. *(Rises, picks up suitcase)* Not until the deportations are canceled, and the detainees from Kistarcsa are returned to Hungary.
- Wisliceny: Kastner... Kastner... What are you doing? *(To Krumey)* He forgets who he's talking to.

Krumey: Kastner, don't make us change the cordial atmosphere of these negotiations. Under the circumstances, impulsive action can be dangerous. Be reasonable. All of you.

Brand: What kind of reason would help the lamb in the slaughterhouse?

Wisliceny: I don't understand what's going on here.

Kastner: I thank you for your cooperation.

Krumey: I suggest you hear me out to the end. If you really want proof of our new attitude... If you'd let me finish what I was saying earlier, you'd have it by now. Obviously, the Reichsführer can't send the Jews from Waldsee back to Hungary, but he's willing to grant one of your earlier requests: to allow emigration from Hungary for a limited number of Jews.

Kastner: The Reichsführer is ready to do that?

Krumey: Yes.

Kastner: When?

Krumey: Immediately. The minute you find a country willing to accept them.

Brand: We have entry visas to Palestine.

Krumey: Very good. How many?

Brand: Six hundred.

Krumey: Prepare a list of six hundred, and they'll go.

Brand: We'll give you a list of six hundred families, sir, within a week.

Krumey: Six hundred individuals.

Brand: Every visa is good for a whole family.

Krumey: Six hundred persons, I've said. And this whole matter is a state secret. The Hungarians must not get wind of it. Is that clear, Kastner?

Kastner: Yes, sir.

Wisliceny: The suitcases. *(They put suitcases on the table. Exeunt Krumey, Kastner, and Brand. Lights on Eichmann, speaking with Wisliceny on the telephone)*

Scene 34

SS Offices. Eichmann and Wisliceny are talking on the telephone.

Eichmann: You two are getting no commission. I need this money for other purposes.

Wisliceny: What sort of purposes, may I ask?

Eichmann: Somebody has to pay the Hungarian Railways for transporting the Jews to Auschwitz. The financial situation of the Reich doesn't allow a budget for this purpose. Every train costs me 42,000 pengős. You'll have to get more money out of them.

Wisliceny: But, sir, aren't we overdoing this just a little? We don't know how the war will end. We may need the money for ourselves. Maybe we should transfer part of it to South America. Our families...

Eichmann: Loyalty, Dieter, is measured precisely at moments like these. Don't be a worm. You could learn a lot from this Kastner. All those large sums passing through his hands and nothing sticks to him. Pity he's a Jew. He could be one of us. And if you ever mention commission to me again, you'll find yourself in Auschwitz. They need officers there. *(Blackout)*

Scene 35

Helen Kastner's apartment. Helen, Bogyo.

Helen: Go to the store on the corner, if you have to. I wouldn't leave our street though, not even for cigarettes.

Bogyo: You really think it's more dangerous on the street than in here?

Helen: Our street is not so dangerous. The Germans won't bother with it. But to go out on the avenue, just to buy cigarettes? Why look for trouble? *(The door opens. Enter Kastner. Helen is startled)* Rezső! I didn't know you had a key to my apartment.

Kastner: Well, I do. Hello.

Helen: Still, you could have knocked. You gave me such a fright.

Kastner: I did knock. Nobody answered. *(Turns to Bogyo)* How are you, Bogyo? *(Bogyo does not reply)* How are you?

Helen: She's better.

Kastner: Could I talk to her alone for a few minutes?

Helen: Don't be impertinent, Rezső. First you come in here without knocking, and now you're chasing me out.

Kastner: Mother, please. Just for a few minutes, that's all. Please, Mother.

Helen: That's better. I'll make you both some tea. The kettle's hot. And don't you two fight in my house.

Kastner: Two sugars, Mother.

- Helen: Stop pampering yourself. You'll get one. *(Exit)*
- Kastner: Feeling better?
- Bogyo: I didn't realize you were so interested in my feelings.
- Kastner: I've come to take you home.
- Bogyo: Thank you, but I'm just fine right here. *(Takes a cigarette out of his pack, lights it)* At least here I could stop talking to myself.
- Kastner: No reason why you should stay here. I've checked with the police. They had the wrong address, just as I told you. The whole thing was a mistake.
- Bogyo: A mistake?
- Kastner: Yes. And it won't happen again. Obersturmbannführer Krumei spoke to the Chief of Police, and the matter is taken care of.
- Bogyo: I can't believe my ears. What a funny setup. You're running around all day to your meetings, and I'm sitting at home with the Gestapo guarding me.
- Kastner: Krumei has good reasons to protect me. We've made serious progress in the negotiations. We've even managed to get six hundred emigration permits from them. Krumei realizes that I need my freedom of movement. Here, this is yours. Exemption from wearing the yellow star. Take it.
- Bogyo: *(Takes it)* You've got six hundred emigration permits?
- Kastner: Yes.
- Bogyo: Are you sure now, Rezső? Because if you're not absolutely sure, I don't want to hear about it. I don't want to live with deceptions.
- Kastner: I should hope not.
- Bogyo: I have to know. Do we have an emigration permit? Can we leave here at last?
- Kastner: *(Realizing her meaning)* Bogyo, we haven't made up the list—or even thought about who would be leaving.
- Bogyo: What do you mean you haven't thought about it? You didn't think that I'd want to leave? Or your old mother? And what about my parents? They wouldn't want to leave?
- Kastner: Of course, I thought you'd want to leave. But it hadn't occurred to me that you'd leave without me. You have no idea what I've been through. I need you to be with me. I do expect you to stay with me, even if it's a little hard for you. It's hard for me, too.
- Bogyo: Don't preach to me.

- Kastner: I didn't mean to preach.
- Bogyo: What's all this righteousness all of a sudden? And coming from you.
- Kastner: Bogyo, I've come to take you home, not to give you a license to run away from here by yourself.
- Bogyo: I don't want to run away by myself. I want to leave with you. Am I supposed to be ashamed of wanting to live? I don't care what people say about me, or about you, for that matter.
- Kastner: You've never cared about anything except polishing your nails and having an ample supply of cigarettes. And yes, having a pillow under your fanny while playing cards.
- Bogyo: You're a fool. You'd better take a good look at yourself and see how everybody is using you. How naive can you get? Your best friends will get their families out of the country, and in the end, they'll spit in your face. They'll let you stay behind and play with the castles you've built in the air. You're out of your mind. Just what do you think you can really do? With your stupidity you won't be able to save even a...
- Kastner: You'll be able to get out. I'll put you on the list, and I'll put you on the train myself. Just get out of here and do whatever you want to.
(Exit)
- Helen: (Enters) Where are you going? (To Bogyo) You've had a fight again?
- Bogyo: I'm going out to get cigarettes. (Exit)

Scene 36

On the street, a terrible sight confronts her. A group of Jews, most of them very old and wearing yellow stars. Some are on their knees while others are leaping over their heads. Hungarian Policemen are standing around, laughing boisterously. A shocked Bogyo runs back to Helen's apartment slamming the door behind her.

Scene 37

Offices of the Jewish Community. Stern, Freudiger, Hansi, and Kastner.

- Freudiger: If we all agree that the Szatmar Rebbe has to get out, then let's put him on the list today.

- Kastner: We can put him on the list right now, but then we won't have room for Leo Goldberg and his family.
- Stern: There's room for both of them if you leave out Gyuri Wessely.
- Kastner: Why Gyuri Wessely?
- Stern: I know that Wessely is a very active Zionist, Kastner, and that he's very close to you. But Leo Goldberg has given us a lot of money. One and a half million pengős last month alone.
- Hansi: Maybe the Szatmar Rebbe's group should be reduced. Twenty-seven persons for one family is a little too much.
- Freudiger: But he's got nine children. He and his wife; his mother-in-law and father-in-law; his brother-in-law and their respective parents, plus his sister and her husband, and another eight children. You wouldn't want to separate small children from their parents, would you?
- Kastner: Wessely must get out, sir. The police have been after him for weeks.
- Stern: How can you compare a minor Zionist functionary to Leo Goldberg or the Szatmar Rebbe? What right does he have?
- Hansi: Just as you wish, sir. He is only a minor Zionist functionary, as you say, but when you, sir, needed a forged passport for your sister's grandson, you were willing to pay a lot for it to this same Wessely.
- Kastner: And what right does Leo Goldberg have? His money? For three whole years he didn't give a single pengő to our rescue activities. He's always denied he's a Jew at all. Now that the Germans have reminded him that he is one, he is willing to admit it. Now that he knows that either the Germans or the Hungarians are bound to take away his money, he's ready to give it to us. Leo Goldberg and all the rest of the great benefactors that you work so hard for, sir, now ask for favors and offer money.
- Stern: They ask for favors, Kastner? You're spitting in the faces of those who have financed your activities! It is with their money that you've bought the privilege of preparing this very list. Don't forget that! These same people can pay for the trains you say are about to leave, or they can refuse. They're not licking your boots, Kastner. You are licking theirs.
- Kastner: I thank you all very much. *(Gets up, gathers his papers and leaves angrily)*

Scene 38

A street. Kastner is hurrying along. Music. 1st Man stops Kastner.

1st Man: Dr. Kastner?

Kastner: Yes.

1st Man: I wanted to ask you about the list of emigration permits. I've always been a Zionist... *(Music intensifies, the conversation cannot be heard. Kastner refuses and continues on his way. Second Man stops him)*

2nd Man: Dr. Kastner...

Kastner: Yes?!

2nd Man: Don't you recognize me? I'm...

Kastner: Yes... yes... I remember...

2nd Man: The police are looking for me. I'm sorry to bother you, but I can't go home. My friends are afraid to hide me.

Kastner: How can I help you?

2nd Man: I've heard about this train going to Palestine... *(Music intensifies, the argument between the two men is swallowed up. Kastner leaves angrily, 2nd man is alone for a moment, then three Hungarian Policemen come up to him)*

1st Policeman: Hey, you!

2nd Man: Me?

1st Policeman: Papers! *(Second Man produces his papers)* Günther Jötner?

2nd Man: That's me...

1st Policeman: *(Sarcastic)* Günther Jötner?

2nd Man: Yes...

1st Policeman: *(Takes his canteen and pours water over Second Man's head, rinsing out the blond dye, revealing black hair underneath)*
Günther Jötner... ha... *(To the other two Policemen)* The pants...
Pants-check. *(They force him out of his pants and ascertain that he is circumcised)*

2nd Policeman: A work accident, eh? Your prick got caught, and right at the tip, too! *(Policemen laugh. Blackout)*

Scene 39

A street. Komoly and Brand.

Brand: You've always had a way with Stern, Otto...

Komoly: I can't make decisions like that, Joel. I'm willing to do anything to save anyone we can, but to pick whom to save... I just can't. Rezső is less sensitive than I am. I hope he understands.

Scene 40

Eichmann, Endre, and Baky in a night club. They're quite drunk. Music and singing in the background.

Eichmann: And what's the difference between a fat Jew and a skinny Jew?

Baky: A fat Jew stinks more. *(Endre laughs)*

Eichmann: A fat Jew burns longer... *(Baky and Endre nearly burst with laughter)* And what's the difference between a loaf of bread and a Jew?

Endre: What?

Eichmann: *(To Baky)* Well?

Baky: What?

Eichmann: A loaf of bread doesn't scream when they put it in the oven... *(They all roll with laughter)* And how can you fit fifty Jews into a small Opel?

Endre: Fifty???

Eichmann: Two in front, three in back, and the rest in the ashtray... *(General hilarity)*

Baky: But tell me, Herr Obersturmbannführer, sir, if that's so, then why do you deal with them, and let them get out on that train? We know everything, you know. No, really. Tell me. And you take all their money. That's Hungarian money, you know, for yourself. Why? That's our money, isn't it?

Eichmann: *(Chuckles)* The train? László Baky, you don't even begin to realize how much you've been taken for a ride. I'll collect all those dirty Zionists in one train and send them to Auschwitz. One big package. All of them together. *(They laugh wildly. Music)*

Scene 41

In his apartment Kastner is dozing in an armchair. Around him is a pile of newspapers. Knocking at the door. Kastner recognizes Brand's signal. Rises to open the door.

Kastner: Just a minute, Joel. Just a second. *(Opens the door. To his surprise, it's Hansi)* Oh, Hansi... *(Fastens the belt of his robe)* I thought it was Joel. I haven't had a chance to put away these newspapers. Come in. I dozed off a little...

Hansi: Where is Bogyo?

Kastner: She's not here.

Hansi: Not here? Has anything happened to her?

Kastner: No. She wasn't feeling well and went to stay overnight with my mother. Would you like something to drink? Coffee?

Hansi: Yes, thank you. Actually no. Don't bother. I just wanted to talk to you for a moment.

Kastner: Sit down. Not there, the leg is broken. *(Hansi sits down. Kastner is looking for his lighter. Hansi gets up)*

Hansi: *(Giving him the lighter)* Here you are.

Kastner: *(Plops down listlessly)* You're sure you don't want something to drink?

Hansi: Yes, I'm sure, thanks. I wanted to ask you. Krumey has agreed to issue six hundred permits, right?

Kastner: Yes. *(Lights up)*

Hansi: Why exactly six hundred?

Kastner: That's how many entry visas we have.

Hansi: And if you had said eight hundred? Only fifty of those visas are real, anyway. Another two hundred could have been forged in a day.

Kastner: Just a minute. I'm not quite awake yet. What are you getting at?

Hansi: Maybe you want something to drink. Coffee. I'll put on the water. Have you had anything to eat?

Kastner: Yes. Thank you. I don't know if we have any coffee. *(Hansi goes into kitchen and comes back with a glass of water)*

Hansi: Water. *(Kastner drinks)* If six hundred is an arbitrary number, we could ask Krumey for another six hundred.

- Kastner: I don't know. We've already failed to turn those entry visas into six hundred family permits. Maybe we'd better wait and see that this first group really leaves and gets to Palestine, and not some other place.
- Hansi: Look, if they get to Palestine, we have saved them. And if not, what have we lost?
- Kastner: I can't go to Krumei again, Hansi. If I ask for additional permits, he's likely to consult Eichmann. Eichmann would be furious and might cancel the permits already issued.
- Hansi: You've told me yourself that they've got good reasons for giving us these...
- Kastner: I can't play this game anymore. Let somebody else go. I've done my share. Instead of being grateful for the six hundred permits I've obtained from the Germans, people are spreading the rumor that I've been handing them out to whoever I please.
- Hansi: That's not true, Rezső. Nobody's spreading rumors about you. On the contrary. Otto himself said that, without you, this first group could never have been arranged.
- Kastner: People attack me in the street because of these permits. If they hear there are six hundred more, they'll set up a blockade around the house. One Jew stopped me on the street: "Kastner, the police are looking for me. If you don't give me a permit, I'm finished." What could I say to him? Why do I have to make these decisions? Why do I have to do it alone? *(Gets up)* Why are you all attacking me? You've given me all the dirty work to do and left me on my own. I'm not doing anything anymore. Get someone else. Let Joel go there. Or Otto. I've had it. *(Blows up)* Leave me alone! I want to rest, I want some peace and quiet. Enough! I'm fed up with these people. I don't want to see anybody anymore! *(Pause. Hansi starts out. Kastner, contrite, calls after her)* Hansi... Hansi... Don't go. I'm sorry, I got carried away. I'll be all right. You have to stay with me for a little while. Bogyo's left me. She's moved in with my mother. I've been alone for the last two weeks. I have nobody to fight with. You're the only one who can understand that. Stay a while... *(Hansi, already at the door, turns and walks toward Kastner. They hug)*

Scene 42

Offices of the SS. Late at night. Wisliceny, Kastner, and Lulu.

- Wisliceny: *(Counting dollar bills)* Ten thousand dollars for two hundred permits? Any way I figure it, Kastner, it comes to fifty dollars per skull. Isn't that right, Lili?
- Lulu: Lulu...
- Kastner: You've forgotten the dessert.
- Wisliceny: She won't ask me for anything extra in the morning, will she?
- Kastner: Refreshments are on the house. *(Hands a bill to Wisliceny, who sticks it into Lulu's bra)*
- Lulu: Danke, bitte.
- Wisliceny: When my main course is in Hamburg, I can't be too choosy about my dessert. *(Laughs)*
- Lulu: Ish liebe dish. . .
- Wisliceny: Couldn't you get one that speaks German?
- Kastner: This one has other, more outstanding qualities, sir.
- Wisliceny: Kastner, Kastner, always one more joker up your sleeve. *(Seriously)* Still, I would have thought that you valued Jews in, shall we say, more rounded figures.
- Kastner: When we get the permits, we'll double the amount, sir.
- Wisliceny: That's a very wise idea, Kastner. But it's not enough. You already know Obersturmbannführer Eichmann. He's a thorough man. *(Indicating Lulu)* Gifts like this don't influence him.
- Kastner: That's all I have at my disposal, sir.
- Wisliceny: I'm not talking about money, Kastner. You're a man who understands delicate matters, and as you can see, I'm not an idiot, either. We both know that the Reich will not last a thousand years. If the Russians attack us in the Carpathians, we may not last a thousand hours. Let's think about that, Kastner, shall we?
- Lulu: Bitte, bitte, danke... Ish liebe dish...
- Kastner: *(Silencing her)* What do you mean, sir?
- Wisliceny: We could help each other, Kastner. After the war, a lot of fingers will be poking around, checking into our activities among the Jews

in Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia. I'll give you two hundred permits, and you will give me a piece of paper.

Kastner: Paper?

Wisliceny: Yes. Something short. Simple. In it you will put down the things I've done for you. The main thing is that my good intentions are very clear. Do you understand what I mean, Kastner?

Kastner: Indeed, I do, sir. The moment I get the permits, you'll get the paper from me.

Lulu: Bitte, bitte, Wisliceny... danke... Ish liebe dish...

Wisliceny: To your health, Kastner.

Lulu: Skol! *(Adds a juicy Hungarian curse)*

Wisliceny: What did she say, Kastner?

Kastner: She's already in love with you, sir.

Wisliceny: *(Laughing hard)* Good for her. Right... Bravo... When you come to get her in the morning, bring her something else to wear. She can't walk out of my office like this.

Kastner: Just leave it to me, sir. Good night. *(Kastner exits. Wisliceny and Lulu retire to a side room. Blackout)*

Scene 43

Offices of the Jewish Community. Freudiger, Stern, Komoly, Kastner, and Brand.

Stern: *(To Kastner)* A very admirable achievement, Kastner. These two hundred additional permits... I hope they'll help us out of our predicament. In my congregation alone, I have 147 people I simply can't refuse.

Kastner: Wisliceny has also given me a few hundred more postcards from Waldsee. *(Gives a small package to Freudiger)*

Stern: Very good. *(To Freudiger)* I want these distributed immediately. Good news should not be delayed. *(To Kastner)* Out of the two hundred additional permits my congregation should get, according to these lists... *(Counting names on the list)*

Brand: *(To Komoly)* Here's one addressed to you, Otto.

Komoly: To me?

Freudiger: I suggest we divide the permits in proportion to the size of each organization, as usual.

- Brand: Yes. Somebody named Oshbeno Witztimberg.
- Komoly: Witztimberg? *(Looks at the postcard)* Oshbeno Witztimberg... I know somebody called Timberg. Benó Timberg. In fact, he was imprisoned in Kistarcsa, then sent to Waldsee. *(He screams)* Oh my God. Benó Timberg did send this postcard. He's trying to tell us about Auschwitz. He's added letters to his name. Together they make up Auschwitz. Here. OshBenó WitzTimberg. Oshwitz. Auschwitz. *(Kastner scrutinizes the postcards)*
- Stern: Who is this Timberg?
- Komoly: A lawyer. Active in the Young Maccabee movement.
- Freudiger: *(Shouting)* Auschwitz here, too. *(Holding up a postcard)* Somebody has tried to erase the letters, but you can still see. Auschwitz.
- Stern: *(Looking at the postcard)* Ernő Kohn. That's Kohn, the eye doctor from Rök Szilárd Street. *(Looking at the other postcards)* Hirsch, curator of the Museum. The lawyer Fabian. Mrs. Weisz, Mrs. Reiner. The engineer Gabor. Greenberg. These names were on the lists Krumey's given me. *(Long pause)*
- Freudiger: Maybe trains have gone out from other towns, too. Budapest may be the only place with Jews left in it. We just don't know. These damned Germans have been deceiving us all along.
- Komoly: If we give them these new lists, they'll send all these people to Auschwitz, too.
- Freudiger: I'll have nothing to do with these lists. I won't give them a single name from my congregation. We can't put up with these lies anymore. *(To Stern)* Perhaps you could talk to Admiral Horthy, sir. He's still the Governor of this country.
- Stern: And who can guarantee that he isn't a part of all these lies? Is there anyone left in Hungary one can trust?
- Freudiger: You're right, sir. We can't go on functioning like this. We can't save anybody. Now we have to spread the word, we must warn people. Every Jew has to save himself. Find a way to escape, or go into hiding.
- Kastner: Everybody will use his own connections to get away, right? And what about those who have no connections, what will they do? Look, we still have the promise of those eight hundred permits. Maybe, despite everything, we should find out just what is behind that promise.

- Komoly: No more meetings with the Germans, Rezső. From this moment on, we're breaking off all contacts with them, and that includes contacts about those permits.
- Brand: How can you break off contacts with them? If they call us, we won't go? But, if we don't lose our heads, maybe we can benefit from what we've just learned and be more careful. What if we turned this list over to the Red Cross?
- Komoly: Since when do the Germans pay any attention to the Red Cross?
- Kastner: Otto, let's be logical about this. I suggest we do give these postcards to the respective families and also tell them the truth. With the Germans, we pretend we don't know anything. Maybe they'll be less cautious. If they find out we're on to them, they'll come up with new tricks, and they might even speed up the rate of deportation. Later we'll check...
- Stern: *(Angry)* Are you trying to compete with them in cunning, Kastner? With them? There's no limit to their trickery. The more cautious we are, the more underhanded they become. Look where this method has gotten us. They've lied to you. You've believed them, and we've all been taken in right along with you. The Judenrat has become a tool of the Germans. We've called their meetings for them, we've turned apartments over to them, and we have published their proclamations. Now we must stop. *(Pause)* Tomorrow we'll assemble all the leaders of every Jewish organization and announce the dissolution of the Judenrat. From now on, each of us must worry about his own fate. *(Blackout)*

Scene 44

Offices of the Hungarian Police. Endre is sitting at a desk, busy with paperwork. Enter Baky dragging Bogyo along.

- Baky: Mrs. Kastner, sir.
- Endre: Oh, hello, Mrs. Kastner. *(Offers her a chair)* Sit down. How are you? I'm László Endre, secretary of state for Jewish affairs.
- Bogyo: How do you do, sir? My husband has mentioned your name on several occasions.
- Endre: *(Offering her a cigarette)* In my work, I come across Dr. Kastner's name just about every day. *(To Baky)* Can I be of any assistance?
- Baky: Madam's been arrested by the railway station. She wasn't wearing her yellow star and was carrying a forged exemption certificate.

Bogyo: Forged? Impossible, sir. I got the certificate from...

Baky: *(Cuts her off and hands Endre the certificate)* That's not my signature. *(To Bogyo)* One of your people has tried to forge my signature. A period is missing in the lower right-hand corner. I am very careful about the period.

Bogyo: My husband gave me this certificate. It can't be forged.

Endre: If the Colonel here says the signature is forged, it's forged. After all, it's his signature. I'm surprised that of all people you got a forged one from your husband.

Bogyo: I beg you, sir, please talk to my husband. I'm sure he can explain everything.

Endre: I'd be happy to talk to your husband, only I don't see how he could help us. *(To Baky)* Perhaps you could do something?

Baky: The penalty for this offense, according to the law, is ten years in prison. And, of course, detention while awaiting trial. There's nothing to be done. The law is clear.

Bogyo: There must be a mistake, sir. Maybe you could reach my husband by telephone. I'm sure the mistake would be all cleared up. I've never forged anything in my life. Anybody who knows me can tell you that. Maybe you can talk to Obersturmbannführer Krume, sir. He could give you an explanation, too.

Baky: I'm very sorry, madam. *(Motions to a guard to drag her out)*

Endre: Just a minute, Colonel. Maybe there is one little thing that would let us overlook her offense.

Bogyo: Yes, sir...

Endre: There was a meeting this morning in the offices of the Jewish Community. Your husband was there. Immediately afterward the leaders of Jewish organizations were notified of an emergency meeting tomorrow. What's happened? Why the panic?

Bogyo: I don't know, sir.

Endre: I'm trying to help you. Your husband has done business with the Gestapo before, right?

Bogyo: Yes.

Endre: He's transferred money to the Gestapo, hasn't he?

Bogyo: Yes.

Endre: How much?

Bogyo: I don't know.

Endre: Approximately?

Bogyo: A hundred thousand dollars?

Endre: More. More.

Bogyo: I don't know. Really, I don't.

Endre: I suspect they're about to decide on another deal tomorrow. An especially big financial deal. Maybe you could make an effort to refresh your memory. It would help you a lot.

Bogyo: I don't know.

Baky: (*Kicks her*) Talk!

Endre: (*Stopping Baky*) Your husband is organizing the meeting, and he hasn't told you what it's all about?

Bogyo: No.

Endre: This is not a petty hundred-thousand-dollar deal. It's something a lot bigger than that. And your husband has already started wasting some of the money he's made on the deal.

Bogyo: He's got no money. I've never seen him with money.

Endre: He's got no money? Then how can he afford a different nightclub every evening? How come he plays cards with Hauptsturmführer Wisliceny, and loses sixteen thousand dollars in a single game? Where does all that money come from?

Bogyo: I've no idea what you're talking about, sir. I didn't know he was going to nightclubs. He hasn't told me.

Endre: And all kinds of other places, too.

Bogyo: What kind of places?

Baky: (*Kicks her*) Don't you play games with me! Start talking, or else you may never get to your own trial.

Endre: The gentleman is not joking. We have to know what sort of deal is about to be negotiated. In wartime, deals like that are tantamount to treason. If you won't tell us everything you know, you become an accessory to treason.

Bogyo: I don't know anything. Really, I don't.

Baky: We're wasting our time. I'll take her down to the cellar. In ten minutes, we'll know everything.

Bogyo: I don't know anything. My husband and I separated two weeks ago. I haven't seen him at all. I've been living with relatives. With my mother-in-law...

Endre: Separated?

Bogyo: Yes.

Baky: *(Strikes her)* Why didn't you tell me that when I arrested you, you dirty bitch?

Endre: *(Stops Baky)* Get her out of here. Go find her husband. I want to question him, and I don't care if the Germans go complaining to Horthy. *(Baky throws her out of the room and returns)* Go find him. What are you waiting for?

Baky: Leave Kastner alone. He's too important to Eichmann. *(Blackout)*

Scene 45

Kastner's apartment. Kastner and Hansi are having tea. A frightened Bogyo opens the door, looks at Kastner and Hansi, draws her conclusions and leaves, slamming the door.

Kastner: Bogyo! *(She's gone. Blackout)*

Scene 46

Offices of the SS. Eichmann, Krumey, Wisliceny.

Eichmann: You're sure they mean to stir up all the ghettos?

Wisliceny: Absolutely sure. They've already told all their leaders to start some sort of resistance in every ghetto in Hungary.

Eichmann: We can't afford a second Warsaw. Trouble in one ghetto alone can upset our timetable. I've got no time for this kind of nonsense. I've promised the Führer a smooth and clean operation. We've got to stop them. *(To Krumey)* First of all, take care of the censors who checked the postcards. *(Shouting)* The Reich will fall because of negligent clerks. The whole war, all the sacrifices, everything will go down the drain because of these nobodies!

Krumey: I've already taken care of them, sir. Our problem now is how to calm the Jews down.

Eichmann: That's right.

Wisliceny: We could imprison all their leaders before the meeting.

Eichmann: *(Furious)* Idiot! That's the best way to get a million Jews to rise. Do you know what it's like to have a million nauseating rats scurrying around you, biting the soles of your boots? *(Pause)* The fish did not bite. We have to put out more bait. A more tempting

one. *(To Wisliceny)* Don't touch their leaders. Not one. And tell the Hungarians to stay away from them, too, for a few days. They mustn't find out that we know about the postcards.

Krumei: May I suggest, sir, that we give them the exit permits now, ahead of time. That would soften them up a little.

Eichmann: Absolutely, Hermann. You can give them a thousand, if you like. The question is whether that will do the trick. *(To Wisliceny)* Get me the Reichsführer in Berlin.

Wisliceny: *(Into the telephone)* Get me Reichsführer Himmler, urgent.

Eichmann: Now we'll offer them the "Big Deal." The Reichsführer has been pressuring me for some time to start it, anyway. He'll be glad to hear we're making contacts for him with the Americans, right, Hermann? That way we might calm the Jews down for a few weeks. *(To Krumei)* I want Brand. Find him. Turn Budapest upside down, but bring him to me right away.

Krumei: Brand, sir? Not Kastner? Kastner is a lot more efficient.

Eichmann: I've said Brand. He'll travel to strike the deal. I want Kastner here. Kastner is strong. He'll stay here and help me finish the job. Find Brand. *(Blackout)*

Scene 47

Stern's office. Stern and Freudiger.

Freudiger: I hope they'll all show up. They were very worried when I told them about the meeting.

Stern: They must know the truth, the whole truth, no matter how bitter. I'll make a short announcement about the dissolution of the Judenrat, and we'll disperse immediately afterward. There will be no discussion, no debate... *(They continue their conversation. Light fades)*

Scene 48

Offices of the SS. Eichmann, Krumei, Wisliceny, and Brand.

Eichmann: Sit down. *(Brand sits down)* You know me, Brand, don't you?

Brand: Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer.

Eichmann: I've solved the Jewish problem in Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, et cetera. Now it's Hungary's turn, eh?

- Brand: What do you mean, Herr Obersturmbannführer?
- Eichmann: I've had my eyes on you for several weeks now, Brand, and also on your Rescue Committee. And I've come to the conclusion that you people, as opposed to the Judenrat, are ripe for our Big Deal. A deal a lot bigger than any we've made with you so far. A deal that will solve more than just the problem of Hungary's Jews.
- Brand: Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer...
- Eichmann: I am prepared to sell you one million Jews.
- Brand: One million?
- Eichmann: One million Jews, wherever they may still be found. We'll get them from Hungary, Poland, Austria, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, any place you wish. You may take women who can bear children and men who can sire children. You pick them. Blood in return for merchandise. Merchandise in return for blood. What do you say?
- Brand: What kind of merchandise do you have in mind, sir?
- Eichmann: Ten thousand trucks, one thousand tons of coffee, and a few hundred tons of soap.
- Brand: You think we can get hold of ten thousand trucks, sir?
- Eichmann: Of course you can, Brand. If we burn twenty thousand Jews every day in Auschwitz, you'll try very hard to get them, won't you? And if you try very hard, the Americans will give them to you. You are the man. The deal is up to you.
- Brand: Me? You want me to get ten thousand trucks, sir? I can't take on a mission like that... surely not on my own responsibility. The Rescue Committee has to decide who will act on its behalf.
- Eichmann: But you'll be talking to the Americans on my behalf, too. And I decide who acts on my behalf, don't I, Brand?
- Brand: I'm only a member of the Rescue Committee... not even a senior member. The Committee won't agree to my representing it. I can negotiate with border guards... tax people... the police... I've no experience in such missions. I've got no connections. This is a job for somebody a lot higher up than...
- Eichmann: I see no difficulty whatsoever, Brand. You'll fly to Istanbul. The Jewish Agency has a branch of your Rescue Committee there, doesn't it? They'll put you in touch with the American Ambassador... Steinhardt... a Jew. He'll take the matter to Roosevelt.

- Brand: Sir, I'm not the right man. Nobody will even talk to me. I've got no chance to see the American Ambassador.
- Eichmann: Tell this Jew Steinhardt that the trucks have to be equipped with winter gear, snow chains, tow bars, tarpaulin tops... and promise him, on my behalf, that we'll transfer them immediately to the Eastern Front.
- Brand: *(Gets up)* Sir, I'm fully aware of my own limitations, I'm only a junior member of the Committee. I can't take this mission upon myself without the authorization of the Committee. The most I can do is take your request to the Committee for discussion, maybe...
- Eichmann: *(Shouting)* Listen to me, Brand!
- Brand: We have a lot of people who are much better qualified. Like Dr. Kastner, for example.
- Eichmann: *(Screaming)* Sit down!! *(Brand sits down. Pause. Eichmann calms down)* You are an honest man, Brand, serious and responsible. I need a man like you. You'll leave tomorrow morning. *(Pause. Brand is nonplussed. When he realizes he has no choice, he turns to Eichmann)*
- Brand: When I talk to the Americans, what guarantees can I give them that you will in fact release one million Jews?
- Eichmann: They won't need any guarantee. The moment you return with an agreement, I'll release a hundred thousand Jews. Only then will I get a thousand trucks. When I release another hundred thousand, I'll get another thousand trucks and so on. Pretty fair, eh?
- Brand: Yes, sir.
- Eichmann: You'll leave tomorrow. You've got two weeks. Your wife and children will stay here until you come back. *(To Krumey)* Prepare a German passport for him. Tonight.
- Krumey: The passport is ready. *(Takes a passport from his bag, hands it to Brand)*
- Eichmann: Tell your friends on the Committee, and the Americans, too, that starting tomorrow four trains loaded with Jews will leave for Auschwitz every day. Three thousand Jews on each train. Take this into account, Brand. The sooner you get back, the more of your friends you'll save.
- Brand: *(Puts the passport on the table)* That's impossible, sir. If the transports start tomorrow morning, there is no point in my going.

Nobody will negotiate with me while Jews are being sent to Auschwitz. Everybody knows what happens in Auschwitz...

Eichmann: What is it you want, Brand?

Brand: To hold the transports until I come back.

Eichmann: Out of the question.

Brand: Then I won't go. You're making me fail in advance, sir. And you, sir, if you are really interested in the success of the mission...

Eichmann: *(Cutting in)* Don't go! Tomorrow morning four trains will leave for Auschwitz, and you'll be on the first one! *(Starts for the door)*

Krumey: Obersturmbannführer Eichmann, permit me, sir... *(Approaches Eichmann, whispers into his ear)*

Eichmann: *(To Krumey)* Out of the question. *(Krumey whispers to him again. Conciliatory, Eichmann returns to Brand)* The transports will start for Auschwitz tomorrow morning, just as I've told you. But we'll keep the people there in the cooler for two weeks. If you come back without an agreement, we'll throw them into the ovens. Is that clear?

Brand: Yes, sir.

Eichmann: I'll see you in two weeks. For the moment we can dispense with the handshake. Ultimately, we do have a common purpose, don't we, Brand? *(Blackout)*

Scene 49

Stern's office. Freudiger, Stern, and Kastner.

Stern: *(Angry)* I don't believe in any German proposal anymore, Kastner. We've decided to dissolve the Judenrat, and I will make the announcement in less than an hour.

Kastner: But we've already sent a telegram to the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, sir, and they've accepted this proposal on the spot. Dr. Chaim Weizmann himself has left for Istanbul to meet Brand. This telegram came twenty minutes ago. *(Shows a telegram)* "Joel should leave. Chaim is waiting for him."

Stern: Allow me not to share your enthusiasm, Kastner. Frankly, I don't believe Weizmann can pull off such a deal. And I have even graver doubts about Brand's abilities.

- Kastner: It is precisely because of those doubts that he must be helped. If you give him your authorization, too, his mission will carry a lot more weight. What have you got to lose, sir?
- Freudiger: Kastner, we don't want another deal with them. We've decided to disband. Within a day or two, we won't even be in Budapest.
- Stern: I won't authorize a deal I don't believe in. We'll have no more deals with the devil.
- Kastner: *(Addressing both Stern and Freudiger)* You won't make any more deals with the devil? You? It's me who's knocking on his door every day. It's my throat he's holding in his claws. It's me who has to humiliate himself before him. I am the one who is contaminated with his slime when I come to offer you things in his name. I'm doing all that, not you! But when he offers to release Jews, I'm willing to do business with him, even for a single Jew. And when he offers me a chance to save a million Jews, who am I to say "no more deals with the devil"? You are supposed to be the leaders of these Jews. What gives you the right to say a thing like that? Who gives you the right to refuse an offer like that? "No more deals with the devil!" *(Turns to leave)*
- Freudiger: *(To Stern)* If you will allow me, sir, I don't think anything terrible will happen if we wait a couple of weeks. *(Calls after Kastner)* Kastner! Kastner! *(Blackout)*

Freudiger turns to the audience.

- Freudiger: In the end, the Judenrat was not dissolved, and we continued to negotiate with the Germans. We sent out no warnings, sounded no alarm. It's hard to say whether we believed in Brand's mission. Still, we held on to it as if it were a lifeline. With all our doubts, we held on to it. Maybe there is a contradiction there. It's possible. Many have accused us of fearing for our own skins and of being afraid to break off contact with the Germans. That, too, is possible. And who among us was not afraid? I don't know what drove Kastner. Certainly not fear. His courage has always been a puzzle to me. We wanted to gain time. We knew that in order to gain time, we had to keep things quiet. We figured that panic would help no one...

Scene 50

Helen Kastner's apartment. Knocking at the door. Helen hurries to the door but hesitates to open it.

Helen: Who is it?

Kastner: What's happened to the door, damn it? I've just broken my key!

Helen: Who is it?

Kastner: It's me, Mother!

Helen: *(Opens door)* Rezső, at last. Why are you so late?

Kastner: What's wrong with the door?

Helen: I had to have the lock changed. I couldn't calm her down. Now I keep the key on me all the time so she can't leave the house. I can't keep on watching her, Rezső.

Kastner: Why should you keep on watching her?

Helen: You have to take her home. She's talking about you all the time. Since that interrogation by the police, she's been talking in her sleep.

Kastner: What kind of things does she say?

Helen: All kinds of things, but I can't possibly repeat them. She's restless. She's chain-smoking all day long. That's not healthy. She's really suffering. You have to take care of her. She's your wife.

Kastner: Mother, can't you help me a little? I've got a million people to take care of.

Helen: You know her. We've never gotten along.

Kastner: Just a few more days, Mother. Two weeks, maybe three, but no more. There are new developments. Very involved business. I just won't have time for anything else. Thousands of people... hundreds of thousands... I've got to get them trains, boats... take them abroad... help them settle... take care of food, shelter. I don't know if I'll be at home at all.

Helen: She's been here almost a month. I can't do it anymore.

Kastner: She'll get over things in a few days, I'm sure, Mother. I beg you. *(Enter Bogyo. Pause)* Bogyo...

Bogyo: What's he doing here, Helen?

Helen: He's come to visit you, right, Rezső?

Kastner: I've come to talk to you. I know what you've been through. I'm truly sorry.

- Bogyo: I don't want to talk to you. Go talk to the people you hang around with day and night. Talk to those you spend your time with in nightclubs, the ones you play cards with. I've heard about the money you take from the till and lose on cards. Even the police know about it. *(To Helen)* I couldn't even afford a roll. I had to fight the grocer to sell me cigarettes on credit, and he goes and loses twenty thousand dollars on cards in a single night.
- Kastner: Bogyo, what's all this nonsense? You don't trust me? You'd rather believe what those bastard Hungarians tell you? You believe Endre?
- Helen: Anybody want tea? I've got some cake, too.
- Bogyo: You get money to save people, and you spend it on whores. You don't think I know about it? Of course, you tell everybody that you've got no choice, that you do it for the contacts you need. I know you. You're doing it because you've got no inhibitions at all, because your thirst for adventure knows no limits. *(To Helen)* I was a fool, I didn't believe these stories. I thought he did everything for the good of the people. And all the time, I was sitting at home, waiting for him.
- Helen: Bogyo, what's gotten into you? *(To Kastner)* Do something, Rezső, she doesn't know what she's talking about.
- Bogyo: He thinks he's some sort of national hero. That they'll erect a statue for him...
- Kastner: I'm spending money on whores? What are you talking about? If you just calm down a little, I'll tell you exactly...
- Bogyo: What am I talking about? I'm talking about those dirty little deals of yours. And with whom? With the lowest of Germans, with the worst of these mad killers. You hang around them all day hoping they'll throw you a bone. Is that how you save people? And then you go out with them at night... get drunk with them.
- Helen: Bogyo, that's enough.
- Bogyo: *(To Helen)* No, Helen, he'll hear me out to the end. They pick up a bunch of whores and party with them all night. And don't tell me you're not enjoying it, Rudolf Kastner. You forgot a long time ago why you've stayed behind in Budapest. Then I come home to find you with that other woman...

Scene 51

A street. Kastner, Brand, and Hansi. Brand is ready for his journey.

Hansi: *(Indicating Brand's overcoat)* I've sewn the Hungarian passport into the left side, the Swiss one into the right. The stitches are loose. You can tear them easily.

Brand: All right.

Hansi: The list of phone numbers and addresses are sewn in the left sleeve. Shall I go over the code again?

Brand: No, you don't have to. *(To Kastner)* What if I can't get the agreement in two weeks? The transports did start this morning. Twelve thousand people every day...

Kastner: Send something, anything. Doesn't matter what. An interim agreement, new proposals. The main thing is for us to have something to talk to them about. Send telegrams. Even to Eichmann himself.

Hansi: Don't worry. Weizmann's already in Istanbul, waiting for you. Show him Stern's letter.

Brand: The letter. Where is it?

Hansi: I put it right into your hand.

Brand: Oh, yes, it's in the passport, the Hungarian one. If only I had another week ...ten days ...I'd feel a lot more relaxed.

Enter SS Agent.

Agent: The car's here. Round the corner. *(To Brand)* Ready?

Brand: Yes.

Agent: Let's go. *(To Kastner and Hansi)* Don't follow us. *(They all stop)* And without too much emotion, please. *(He retires politely)*

Brand: *(To Kastner)* The chutzpah! They've made me pay for his flight, too.

Kastner: Never mind. Good luck, Joel. Don't forget to get me Darling cigarettes.

Brand: Good-bye, Hansi.

Hansi: Good-bye.

Brand: *(To Kastner)* Bye. Look after Hansi and the children. *(Warmly, he shakes Kastner's hand, then turns to Hansi again)* Take care of yourself... *(Exit Brand)*

A group of Jews, wearing yellow stars and carrying suitcases, moves slowly along the street, accompanied by Hungarian police. Hansi and Kastner watch the group, then quickly leave

Scene 52

An interrogation room at Hungarian Police headquarters. Komoly, stripped to the waist, is sitting, tied to his chair. Standing next to him are Endre and a Hungarian policeman, the latter holding a club in his hand.

Endre: Where did he go?
 Komoly: To Romania.
 Endre: What's he got to do in Romania?
 Komoly: He went to buy shoes.
 Endre: That's a lie. He's left on a mission for Eichmann. Baron Stern said at your meeting that an emissary would be leaving. He meant Brand.
 Komoly: He went to buy shoes. *(Endre motions to the policeman who strikes Komoly. Blackout)*

Lights on another part of the stage, where Baky is interrogating Kastner.

Baky: Don't tell me again about the shoes, Kastner. I want the truth. Whom is he meeting in Romania?
 Kastner: A shoe merchant from Bucharest.
 Baky: A shoe merchant or an American agent?
 Kastner: A shoe merchant.
 Baky: Then why did an SS agent go with him?
 Kastner: Maybe the SS want to buy shoes, too.
 Baky: Since when do you people buy shoes together with the SS?
 Kastner: We don't buy shoes together with them.
 Baky: What do you do together with them? *(Blackout)*

Lights on another area of the stage, where Endre is interrogating Hansi. A Policeman strikes Hansi whenever instructed to do so.

Endre: Why does he have to buy shoes in Romania?
 Hansi: There was a chance to buy large quantities. Cheap...
 Endre: For whom?
 Hansi: Whoever wants to buy.
 Endre: Who is buying shoes today?
 Hansi: Those who walk barefoot. *(Endre signals, the policeman hits Hansi)*
 Endre: What was the name registered in his passport?
 Hansi: His name.
 Endre: Until this very moment, nobody called Brand has left the country.
 Hansi: He has. *(Endre sticks a lighted cigarette into her neck)*
 Endre: What was the name in the passport?
 Hansi: *(Screaming)* His own name... *(Blackout)*

Lights on Baky interrogating Komoly.

Baky: Brand is a Communist. He's already done time for that. Now he's gone to meet Communists in Romania. The Jews are preparing a Communist revolution again.
 Komoly: Brand is a Zionist socialist. We've got nothing to do with the Communists.
 Baky: Communists, socialists, it's all the same thing, Komoly. No court would bother with the differences between them. Did you know that most of the partisans were Communists?
 Komoly: Yes.
 Baky: Either you turn over Brand, or I'll charge you with aiding the partisans.
 Komoly: Why bother charging me? You do what you want without a trial, anyway... *(Baky signals. Policeman hits Komoly. Blackout)*

Lights on Endre interrogating Kastner.

Endre: Kastner, nobody knows you're here. We could tie a stone to your feet and let you sink quietly into the Danube. What would happen to Brand's mission if you were to disappear? Think about that.

Kastner: What do you want?

Endre: Where is Brand? Whom is he meeting?

Kastner: He went to Romania.

Endre: Come on, we both know that he's not in Romania, and he didn't leave Hungary to buy shoes. Kastner, we're wasting time. Let's make a deal.

Kastner: What deal?

Endre: You give me the details of Brand's mission.

Kastner: And you?

Endre: And I give a few Jews in Budapest permission to leave the country.

Kastner: How many?

Endre: A thousand. We'll recruit them into labor battalions, send them to build fortifications on the eastern front, and they'll walk over to Romania. The Germans wouldn't even feel it.

Kastner: It's a pretty tempting deal. Too bad Brand's already gone to buy shoes. *(Blackout)*

Lights on Baky interrogating Hansi.

Baky: Too bad about your delicate skin. *(Policeman strikes her)* You'll be limping for many years if you don't talk. *(Policeman strikes her)* I wouldn't have believed a Jewess like you could really take it. *(Policeman strikes her)* Nobody would know you talked. A border guard would identify him by accident. That's all. I'll give you a written guarantee that he'll be released right after questioning. *(Hansi is silent)* You'll leave me no choice. Your children will be here soon. *(Hansi is silent)* You've got fifteen minutes to rest before they get here. You should look a little better for them. *(Blackout)*

Lights on Endre interrogating Komoly, whose condition is quickly deteriorating.

Endre: *(Impatient)* I'll bring a hundred Jewish kids in here and kill one a minute right in front of your eyes until you talk. *(The policeman hits Komoly)* Their fate will be on your conscience.

Komoly: And what will be on your conscience?

Endre: Shut up! *(The policeman strikes Komoly)*

Komoly: Brand is buying shoes in Romania. *(The policeman strikes him)*
Filthy Nazi dogs. *(The policeman strikes him)*

Endre: *(To the policeman)* Look what you've done! You finished him off, idiot! *(Komoly collapses, Endre bends over him)* He's dead. Throw him in the Danube. *(Blackout)*

Lights on Baky interrogating Kastner.

Baky: I'm giving you a chance to save a thousand lives. The Germans would send them to Auschwitz, anyway. *(Kastner is silent)* I don't understand you, Kastner. If it comes to light one day that you could have saved a thousand people and didn't, you'd have to pay dearly. Instead of saving Jews, you're buying shoes in Romania together with the Germans?! One fine day, a Jewish patriot may put a bullet in your head.

The door is thrown open. Krumei enters with a German soldier.

Krumei: Release him! I told you not to touch this man, didn't I? *(Blackout)*

Scene 53

Krumei's apartment. Kastner and Krumei.

Krumei: Wine from the Rhine Valley, Herr Kastner. I hope you can appreciate a good wine. To the Führer and the Reich. *(Indicates to Kastner that he does not have to repeat these words)* You don't have to. With me, it's already a habit. *(They drink)*

Kastner: Vintage '41, isn't it, sir?

Krumei: Right. The summer of '41 was relatively hot. That's why the touch of sweetness. *(They sit. A Servant brings in a tray of assorted food)* By the way, I want to thank you and the members of your committee for not revealing to the Hungarians the details of

Brand's mission. And please convey, if possible, my condolences to the Komoly family.

Kastner: I'll do that tonight, sir.

Krumey: I'm sorry about what these animals have done to you. By the way, I've kept your mail while you were all gone. Eighty thousand dollars have come from Zurich. I hope you'll make good use of that money. There's also a telegram from Brand. He's already met the American Ambassador in Ankara.

Kastner: *(Looking at the telegram)* That's a very positive development, sir.

Krumey: Indeed, it is, Herr Kastner. I'm very pleased. This will surely strengthen the ties between us. *(Raises his glass)* To your good health!

Kastner: To the success of the deal.

Krumey: Reichsführer Himmler wishes to thank you for your dedicated work, and in addition to the eight hundred permits you've already received, he has granted another two hundred. You're a native of Cluj, Herr Kastner, are you not?

Kastner: Yes, sir, I am.

Krumey: These permits are for the members of your family and your friends in Cluj. The moment you give me the list of their names, the permits will be issued.

Kastner: In the name of my family and friends, I am most grateful, sir.

Krumey: Don't thank me now, Kastner. I hope one of these days you'll have a chance to be as generous to me as I am to you now. I trust your sense of fairness.

Kastner: You can count on it, sir, absolutely. I'm aware of the possible difficulties you may have to face after the war, and I'll do my best to help you. But you could make my job a lot easier, sir, if you were to do something now about the transports. They are being carried out in a most cruel manner, sir. Truly inhuman. Without food, without water.

Krumey: I'm sorry, Kastner, but I'm not the only SS officer in Budapest. There are a lot of things I don't like, either. The only way to stop the transports is with our Big Deal. This deal, Kastner, is crucial for you, and it's crucial for us as well.

Kastner: What exactly do you mean, sir?

Krumey: Well, you know so much already, I'm willing to risk telling you this: Reichsführer Himmler is about to get rid of the Führer and

start negotiations with the Americans about winding down the war. Our Big Deal will be the access channel to the Americans. Now you see why this deal is crucial for us.

Kastner: Yes, I do, sir. *(Pause)* But in that case, I hope we can expect more effective help from you personally, sir.

Krumey: I promise to help you all I can, Kastner.

Kastner: Promises will not do any more, sir. You and I together will visit all the places in Hungary and Germany where you are still in command. And if I see any group of Jews, or even a single Jew, that you could save but didn't, I'll be free of any future obligation to help either you personally, sir, or the Reich.

Krumey: Agreed, Kastner, absolutely. I need you as much as you need me. *(Blackout)*

Scene 54

Brand: *(To the audience)* This morning, I left my hotel for the railway station in Istanbul to go to Ankara to meet the American Ambassador Steinhardt. I had a feeling I was being followed. While standing in line to buy tickets, a policeman asked me for my papers. He looked at me for several seconds, then nodded to his men. I got away from him and managed to get lost in the crowd. When I went back to the hotel to collect my things, plainclothes men were waiting for me at the entrance. They let me go in the evening, but I didn't get to see Steinhardt.

Scene 55

Eichmann in his private room. Enter Wisliceny.

Wisliceny: Heil Hitler! *(Eichmann replies in kind)* Telegram from Berlin. Reduction of manpower in all nonessential units. They want officers on the front.

Eichmann: Don't worry, Dieter. They won't take officers your age.

Wisliceny: With the Americans already in Paris, nobody will consider my age, sir.

Eichmann: There are still four hundred thousand Jews left in Hungary that the Führer is determined to get rid of. He won't let you leave even if the Americans enter Germany. *(Enter Guard)*

Guard: Heil Hitler! *(Eichmann replies in kind)* The Jews are here, sir . . .

- Eichmann: Tell them to wait... (*Eichmann goes into the offices of the SS, where Kastner and Hansi are waiting for him. He gets straight to the point*) All emigration permits are canceled, Kastner. You can tear up the lists you've submitted and throw them in the garbage. That's what I'm doing with the telegrams I get from Brand. The two weeks I gave him were up ten days ago.
- Kastner: But, Herr Obersturmbannführer, the Americans are not willing to start negotiations because you've increased the number of transports to Auschwitz.
- Eichmann: I made no secrets about the transports. But I also promised that I'd keep them in the cooler. I've kept my end of the bargain, but you, in your conniving despicable Jewish ways, are now trying to be wise, eh? The permits are canceled.
- Kastner: But, sir, we did have an agreement. There's a signed protocol of our meeting, and we prepared the list at your request. We also paid you. And now you tell us that the agreement is canceled?! This can't go on like this, sir.
- Eichmann: Your nerves are about to give out, Kastner. You probably need a vacation. How about Theresienstadt, eh? Or, perhaps you'd prefer Auschwitz?
- Kastner: I won't give in to threats, sir. Whatever may be waiting for me in Auschwitz could be waiting for me behind that door right now.
- Eichmann: Don't put me to the test, Kastner!
- Kastner: We both know, sir, that nobody else is willing to negotiate with you.
- Hansi: If we don't get the emigration permits today, sir, I'll notify my husband in Istanbul to stop the negotiations at once. But if we do...
- Eichmann: I see that Mrs. Brand is in fact Mr. Brand, eh? If your husband stops the negotiations in Istanbul, the meat grinders will start up in Auschwitz, grinding up twenty thousand Jews every day.
- Hansi: But if we do get the permits, my husband would have solid proof for the American Ambassador that you could be trusted. It's the only way we can make progress with the Big Deal, sir.
- Eichmann: You'll get the permits. You'll have your train, but on one condition: tell me, once and for all, when will your husband be back with an agreement signed and sealed.
- Hansi: Within a week.

Eichmann: A week. Very well, one week it is. If he is not here by then with an agreement, the chimneys of Auschwitz will start spitting you out, all of you, up to the sky. And I am known as a man of my word.
(Exit Eichmann. Blackout)

Scene 56

Brand: *(To Audience)* Like a trapped animal I've been roaming the suburbs of Istanbul for a whole week, waiting for the "Head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency," Moshe Sharett. How long does it take for a man like him to get a visa to Turkey? Doesn't he understand that every day twelve thousand Jews are sent from Hungary to Auschwitz? Doesn't he understand that only Eichmann's word stands between them and the gas chamber? And I don't believe that the British refuse to let him out of Jerusalem. That makes no sense. All the excuses, pretexts, and explanations I've been getting from representatives of the Jewish Agency sound absurd, bordering on madness... What the hell is going on here?

Scene 57

Kastner's office. Kastner and Hansi.

Kastner: *(Exhausted)* One day, when it's all over, I'll meet this man somewhere, and I'll...

Hansi: Rezső, if you don't get hold of yourself, you'll ruin everything. You mustn't show him the slightest sign of weakness.

Secretary: *(Enters)* Baron Stern wants to see you, Dr. Kastner. *(Enter Stern, exit Secretary)*

Stern: Kastner, I hear that besides the twelve hundred places for the Budapest communities, you're keeping another three hundred for your family and friends in your hometown.

Kastner: That's no secret. It was Krumei's decision. I didn't ask him for anything for myself.

Stern: You mean to tell me that Krumei has forced you to keep three hundred places for your family?

Kastner: I didn't ask him for it. He knows that I'm from Cluj, and he's suggested that a whole group could emigrate from there. Not only my family.

- Stern: Mr. Kastner, I can accept your explanation because I know you. But all over Budapest they're saying behind your back that you've deserted the Community and worry only about your own family.
- Kastner: Let them say whatever they like.
- Hansi: Your family will be on that train, too, sir. And most of the families of the whole Judenrat. Many industrialists and bankers, plus fifty people in the Szatmar Rebbe's group. What's the difference between them and our families and friends?
- Stern: I'm very sorry, but the number of people who are getting out because of their personal connection with me is no more than six or seven. The bankers and industrialists on the lists are the people who are paying for the train itself. You're taking three hundred people from Cluj who have paid nothing.
- Kastner: You're wrong, sir. They have promised, in writing, to pay us the moment they're safely out. They all have some capital abroad.
- Stern: I'm a man of experience, Kastner. Let me give you a piece of advice. The moment you make private use of your right to lead the community, you will lose that right.
- Kastner: I don't need that right. My conscience is clean. If there is anybody in this room who can manage things better, well, let him manage. I'd be glad to join my family on that train. *(Enter Freudiger, ashen faced. Pause)* What's the matter?
- Freudiger: Two refugees from Auschwitz just got here. In twenty days, more than three hundred thousand of our people have been killed in the gas chambers. Eichmann didn't keep his promise. He didn't keep anybody in the cooler. From the day Brand left, Eichmann had the meat grinders going. Without selections. They didn't even bother to make them undress, or to separate men from women. Walked them right into the showers. Until they ran out of cyanide. The ovens worked day and night until they cracked because of the heat. Hell! Hell! Three hundred thousand men, women, and children.
- Kastner: How can that be? How could they have kept this a secret until now?
- Freudiger: These refugees have prepared a report complete with numbers, dates, and names of the different communities. *(Holds a sheet of paper in front of Kastner and Stern)*
- Kastner: *(Looking at the sheet)* How can it be? I spoke to Eichmann two days ago. He gave us a week. I've got the minutes of that meeting; Krumei himself signed it. Where are these two refugees? I want to talk to them.

Freudiger: They're hiding.

Kastner: I've got to talk to them. The facts I have are very different. Brand's already in Ankara. He's talked to the American Ambassador. We're expecting a draft of the agreement any time now. Where are these refugees hiding?

Freudiger: They're afraid to be seen. They wouldn't talk to anybody.

Kastner: All right, then I'm going to see Eichmann.

Hansi: Eichmann? Wait a minute. What do you think he's going to tell you?

Kastner: *(Coming back)* Let's not jump to conclusions so fast. This whole thing could be a leak arranged by the Hungarians. They know about Brand's mission, and obviously they want it to fail. That's why they've fabricated this report. Baron Stern, I suggest you sound out the Hungarians, I'll check with the Germans. I sure hope I'm not mistaken. *(Exit)*

Freudiger: That man is lost. We're all lost.

Stern: Three hundred thousand people ...women... the elderly... children... marching into the long building... into the showers... I can see them... they're walking in... then the furnaces... here, they're throwing bodies into them... I can hear the voices... the shouts of the guards ...the crackling noises of the flames... they're burning in the ovens... the smoke... *(Blackout)*

Scene 58

Eichmann's private room. Eichmann and Krumey.

Eichmann: What's happened to you, Hermann? You've become a Jew lover? You've exterminated two million Jews in Poland, almost without any help from me. Has Kastner managed to turn your head?

Krumey: Sir, with your own hands you've destroyed our last chance to negotiate with the Americans. Nobody's going to believe us anymore. Because of this stupid fanaticism, they won't leave a stone standing in the whole Reich.

Eichmann: Don't try to fool me, Hermann. You're not so worried about the Reich, only about yourself. You think that, if you help Kastner save a few Jews, they won't hang you after the war.

Krumey: Loyalty to the Reich is not measured only by the extermination of the Jews, sir. *(Exit)*

Scene 59

Brand: *(To Audience)* At last I've met Moshe Sharett. I sat and talked for eighteen hours straight. I told him everything. He listened and took notes. A few British officers were also present. They took notes, too. They were all shocked. None of them had any idea of the extent of the horror. I hope that things will move quickly from now on. The British have promised to relay their notes to the Americans. Sharett has promised to fly to London and talk with government officials there. He's asked me to accompany him to Jerusalem. Later, I realized that the British had made their assistance conditional on my staying in their hands. I knew what was waiting for Hansi and the children if I delayed. But I had no choice...

Scene 60

Eichmann in his office. Helmut knocks on the door.

Helmut: Kastner wants to see you, sir.

Eichmann: Tell him to come back tomorrow.

Helmut: He says it's urgent, sir. Something about a secret of the Reich.

Eichmann: Tell him to wait. *(Eichmann crosses to the offices of the SS)* What's so urgent, Kastner?

Kastner: We've got a report from Auschwitz, sir. Until now, three hundred thousand of Hungary's Jews have been killed in the gas chambers. You've deceived me all along. You started sending Jews to the gas chambers the very day Brand left for Istanbul. You never intended to let one Jew escape your clutches. Brand will be back in three days with an agreement. How many Jews can you give him? How many?

Eichmann: Brand will not come back, Kastner. At this very moment, Brand is in a Cairo jail and your people at the Jewish Agency can't or don't want to do anything to free him. And it seems that neither the British nor the Americans are too keen on having a surplus of Jews on their hands.

Kastner: Brand will come back. I've got a telegram about an interim agreement. The agreement itself will be sent by mail.

Eichmann: Brand will not come back, Kastner. He's been imprisoned, charged with being a German agent. Funny, eh?

Kastner: He won't come back?

- Eichmann: No. Nobody was even willing to listen to him.
- Kastner: That's why you sent him. You knew all along that Brand was not the right man for this mission. If I had gone, the agreement would have already been signed by Weizmann.
- Eichmann: This deal is dead, Kastner. Weizmann didn't even bother to go to Istanbul, despite your beautiful telegrams.
- Kastner: If this deal is dead, as you say, we'll find another one. This war is just about over. In a few months, the situation will be very different. People who've been responsible for all sorts of deeds will be brought to justice. If you give me Jews now, I'd be ready to...
- Eichmann: You want Jews on credit, Kastner? Eh? On account? You'll pay me in six months? I'm not your man for a deal like that.
- Kastner: Let's play with all the cards on the table, Herr Eichmann. I know you'll do everything to send as many Jews as possible to Auschwitz. But I also know that you have to make a deal with me. I've got my own sources of information. You've got orders from the Reichsführer, and you've got no choice. You have to carry out these orders.
- Eichmann: In my own good time.
- Kastner: Auschwitz is all filled up. You have no more gas. You must make a deal now.
- Eichmann: We'll throw the Jews into the ovens alive.
- Kastner: You may have enough people to throw dead Jews into the fire, but not enough to throw in live ones. The deal I have for you is the easiest way to get rid of Jews.
- Eichmann: What deal is that?
- Kastner: There are still four hundred thousand Jews left in Hungary. Let them get out of here. Instead of trucks, you'll get tractors, bulldozers, heavy equipment. All your roads are ruined. You need that sort of machinery.
- Eichmann: What assurances do I have that you can get hold of such equipment? Once you promised me trucks, remember?
- Kastner: This time I'll take care of everything myself. You know what I'm capable of doing.
- Eichmann: Yes, I do. But time is running out. And Jews are running out, too. I don't know if you'll have any left by the time you get back. Not even the fifteen hundred you want to send out by train.

Kastner: *(Calmly)* Those are not part of this deal. The Red Cross already has their names. If any one of these people is harmed, the Red Cross will abandon your POWs in the hands of the Russians.

Eichmann: The train will get out. I won't touch it.

Kastner: I'll go to Zurich to see about the heavy equipment. I'll need proof for the Americans that this deal is really going through.

Eichmann: What kind of proof?

Kastner: A hundred thousand Jews will be allowed to leave Germany.

Eichmann: A hundred thousand?

Kastner: They'll leave within a month, under my personal supervision. Until I see with my own eyes that they are safe in a neutral country, there won't be any deal.

Eichmann: I want two hundred dollars per skull to cover travel expenses.

Kastner: One hundred dollars. And you'll get that only when they reach a place where you can't get at them.

Eichmann: A hundred and fifty.

Kastner: A hundred and fifty for every healthy Jew. Fifty each for the old and the sick.

Eichmann: Seventy-five for the curable sick. *(Blackout)*

Scene 61

Hansi: *(To Audience)* There were those who said that Rezső had thought of himself as the Savior... an angel... just a little less than God. Others said of him that he was the Angel of Death. Let them say what they will, it cannot be denied that Rezső saved thousands... maybe tens of thousands. I don't have too much faith in history either. History's verdict will be pronounced by those who'll write it, and not by those who have made it.

Epilogue

Kastner: *(Ironic)* During the course of my negotiations with Eichmann, I cooperated with him in the extermination of Hungarian Jewry. So claimed the prosecution, and everybody who was looking for explanations for the Holocaust held on to that accusation. Of course, Kastner's collaboration made the extermination possible. Kastner is the explanation for the Holocaust.

And, as opposed to Kastner, there arose a number of people who had sole rights to heroism. Without a shadow of a doubt, during the war, the Jewish people produced great heroes. Their names have been inscribed in our national honor rolls in golden letters. But how many Jews did these heroes save? What was the purpose of their heroism? And the man who managed to wrest a whole train from the claws of the Nazis, with 1,684 live Jews on it, that man is a collaborator. *(Transition to the train station. Enter Helen and Bogyo)*

Helen: I've heard so many stories about this train, Rezső. Why can't we go to Vienna by car, we could get on the train there.

Kastner: You're not the only one, Mother. We can't take everybody by car.

Helen: Maybe you should get on with us, Rezső. Who knows where we might wind up without you...

Kastner: Don't worry, Mother, you'll get to Zurich. Your passport is in the bag. I put your medicine in your pocketbook.

Helen: The eye drops, too?

Kastner: Yes, yes, of course. *(Train whistle is heard)*

Bogyo: I don't know what to believe anymore, but look, this train is leaving, just as you said it would.

Kastner: I'll have to see about the other trains. I hope to get to Zurich in a few days.

Bogyo: You won't forget to bring the suitcase with my coats, will you, Rezső?

Kastner: No, no. I've made a special note of that. How could I forget something like that?

Bogyo: Good-bye. *(They hug)* Take care of yourself, Rezső.

Kastner: Good-bye, Mother. *(They hug. Kastner hugs Bogyo again. Exeunt Helen and Bogyo. Kastner turns to the audience ironically)* In return for this train, I kept the truth about Auschwitz from the Jews in the ghettos, and that is why they boarded the trains as meekly as sheep go to slaughter. So claimed the prosecution. Your Honor, the only ghetto in all of Europe whose population stayed alive was the Budapest ghetto, despite the absence of acts that people would now consider heroic. The ghetto was saved because of my connections with Hermann Krumei and Kurt Becher. With their help, I sent four additional trains to Vienna and also managed to put a stop to further extermination of people at Bergen-Belsen and

Theresienstadt. Because of these connections, the prosecution called me “the best agent of the Nazis.” Many whose families I could not save thought the same.

Transition to Budapest railway station. Enter Freudiger

Freudiger: I’ve tried to get permits for my family. With my poor connections, I couldn’t. Yours are so much better, Kastner, please...

Kastner: Right now?

Freudiger: Yes. My wife and children are waiting just outside the station.

Kastner: I don’t know what to tell you. You know very well yourself. There’s a list. I can’t make changes now.

Freudiger: Only five permits, that’s all. A drop in the bucket. I’ll pay any amount of money. I beg of you.

Kastner: The train must leave any second. I can’t hold it up for five permits. Who knows what might happen here in the meantime!

Freudiger: Kastner, only my wife and kids. *(Kastner does not reply)* Kastner... *(Exit Freudiger)*

Kastner: *(To Audience)* Eventually, all leaders of the Jewish Community got out. I stayed. Until the very end. When I came here, to Israel, after the war, I got a very cool reception, to put it mildly. The heroism of those who had fought in the ghettos doesn’t need my praise. Had I perished in the Budapest ghetto, I’d be counted among them. But Kastner is a traitor. The District Court of Jerusalem ruled that I “sold my soul to the devil.” My life has become hell. On the third of March 1957, just before midnight, I was returning from the editorial offices of Uj Kelet⁶. Near my house a young man approached me and asked: “Are you Dr. Kastner?” I said, “Yes”. He pulled out a gun, aimed it at my temple and pulled the trigger. The gun did not go off. I ran into the house and got as far as the staircase when I heard a shot. The bullet bounced off the iron railing. I kept on running. Then I heard a second shot. This time he got me. In the back. *(Blackout)*

⁶ Israel’s Hungarian newspaper.

The End