

DISNEY
IN
DEUTSCHLAND
by
John J. Powers

a full length one act drama

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CHARACTERS:

ADOLF HITLER, 46, the new Reich Chancellor of Germany. Born in Branau, Austria, he eventually came to Germany after failing in attempt to enrol as an art student in Vienna. He fought in the Great War and received the Iron Cross. After assuming dictatorship in Germany, he instigated a series of measures to deprive Jews and others of civil rights, finally endorsing a policy of genocide during the second World War.

WALT DISNEY, 33, world-renowned American animator. Mr. Disney began as an animator for a small newspaper in Kansas City, eventually forming his own animation 'studio.' His brother, Roy Disney, suggested he come to Los Angeles, and Disney at last made a name for himself as the 'creator' of Mickey Mouse. Disney inherited his Lutheran father's virulent hatred of Jews; witnessing the success of many Jews in Hollywood, he felt vindicated. His resentment of Jews and Communists, and particularly unions, has been well-documented.

JOSEF GOEBBELS, 36, the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in Hitler's Germany. A friend of Hitler's from the 1920s, Goebbels was publicist and spokesperson for the Nazis, and, when they came to power, he was soon able to dictate the cultural life of Germany. He was openly anti-Semitic and anti-democratic in his speeches as well as his voluminous diaries.

LENI RIEFENSTAHL, 32, filmmaker personally assigned by Hitler to direct films of Nazi party rallies, 1933-1935. She finally was chosen to direct the official film of the Olympic Games in Berlin, 1936. Ms Riefenstahl attempted to rehabilitate her own reputation after the war, but it was clear that she was a Nazi supporter from as early as 1928.

HELMUT KRAUS, 42, Hitler's adjutant, and a close friend of the Fuhrer since the Great War.

MAGDA GOEBBELS, 33, the wife of Josef Goebbels and a close confidante of the Fuhrer. She joined the Nazi Party in 1930 and it's said that she was a revered figure, that Hitler even considered her a kind of First Lady (since, for the longest time, he said he would not marry because he was devoted to Germany). With her husband, she killed their own children in the bunker in 1945; then they both committed suicide.

SCENE ONE:

White, italicised lettering appears centered as in a film, on projection:

Silence

dissolves to:

Memory

dissolves to:

History

dissolves to:

Hitler

dissolves to:

Disney

SCENE TWO:

Darkened, empty stage.

Voices of ADOLF HITLER and his mother ANGELA, with English translation, white on black, onscreen.

MOTHER:

Du darfst nicht draussen gehen. Darfst nicht herausgehen.
You can't go outside. Mustn't go outside.

ADOLF:

Ich wollte doch nie draussen gehen.
I never wanted to go outside.

MOTHER:

Du magst doch den Schnee. Du hast immer---
You love the snow. You've always---

ADOLF:

Es ist zu kalt.
It's too cold.

(Pause)

Warum ist alles so still?
Why is everything so still?

MOTHER:

Alles wartet. Guck aus dem Fenster heraus. Die Luft is so klar.
Everything is waiting. Look out the window. The air is so clear.
(Pause)

Schau! Die Figuren am Glass. Auf dem Glas blassen, da. Deinen Namen buchstabieren.

*Look at the figures on the glass. Blow on the glass, there:
You can spell your name.*

ADOLF:

Es verschwindet. Mutter, mach damit es bleibt.
It's disappearing. (Pause) Mother, make it stay.

MOTHER:

Alles verschwindet.
Everything disappears.

LONG PAUSE IN DARKNESS

SCENE THREE:

(Loud thunder clap. Spot stage left on JOSEF GOEBBELS)

GOEBBELS

We like dramatics. I wrote plays in the years before becoming Gauleiter of Berlin. I remember writing, "Why don't you hate all those who destroyed your youth...[it is they who] have robbed you of the freedom to hate, to hate with all the ardor of a strong heart, to hate everything that is evil and bad. For they have robbed you of your understanding, have made you an *animal* that can neither hate nor love...I, however, want to be able to hate...and I hate all those who would rob me of what is rightfully mine because God has given it to me...Oh, I can hate, and I don't want to forget how. How wonderful it is to be able to hate."

GOEBBELS

I introduce myself, Doctor Josef Goebbels, Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.

(Pause; he bows and waves to audience)

The title was Hitler's idea, actually. I was uneasy with the word 'propaganda,' and besides, how would it be needed after we came into power?

(Pause)

The Fuhrer knew better. He knew you'd always have to keep people on your side.

(Spot *goes out*. In darkness, GOEBBELS voice is heard:)

Everyone believes what they like to remember, or remembers what they like to believe. Like the night Magda, my wife, and I, brought Leni Riefenstahl to the opera---Wagner, probably. *Tannhauser*, I think it was.

(Two women---MAGDA GOEBBELS and LENI RIEFENSTAHL---appear from opposite sides of the stage, carrying fold-up chairs which they position near center stage. GOEBBELS is given a chair from backstage and seats between them, all facing audience. They look as if watching the opera from a house seat, at first enthralled. GOEBBELS slowly moves his left hand up LENI's dress. MAGDA notices, and both women run offstage in shock, carrying their chairs. GOEBBELS moves toward audience)

GOEBBELS

That's what Leni Riefenstahl says happened, in those memoirs. Even some of her biographers believed it, although if you really want to know, Leni was the most man-hungry woman I'd ever met. I realize some of you may not know who she was, in your new, enlightened age. Our Leni Riefenstahl managed to insinuate herself into the Fuhrer's inner circle and become his official filmmaker.

(Pause)

As you can imagine, I had mixed feelings. I had a fondness for the pictures she made in the 20s, with Arthur Franck, grand experiments in what you today would call 'location' shooting, in the Dolomite mountains, in the northern Alps---

(Projection: a clip from Riefenstahl's film, THE BLUE LIGHT)

---these pictures were incredibly popular! Few filmmakers were doing anything on location in those days. Leni thought of herself as a great dancer and actress, but she finally showed her true colours as a director.

(ADOLF HITLER and LENI come from opposite sides of the stage, with fold-up chairs. GOEBBELS gets one from offstage, again, and they sit in triangle, HITLER in center, LENI and GOEBBELS on opposite sides.)

LENI

Danka shoen, Herr Hitler.

HITLER

Gar nicht.

(Tr.: Nothing at all.)

(Pause)

Sie wissen Herr Goebbels.

(Tr.: You know Herr Goebbels.)

LENI

Ja.

GOEBBELS

Ja.

(LENI sighs)

HITLER (to LENI)
Ihre neuen Filme sind bezaubernd!

(Tr.: Your new films are enchanting.)

(GOEBBELS returns to spot, stage left; lights black-out in centre.)

GOEBBELS (to audience)
He *would* think her films enchanting! How could he not? The Dolomite mountains were brought home to him, so to speak. And there, among those dizzying peaks---there was this perfect specimen of Aryan womanhood dancing and hopping about in a kind of kitsch Valhalla---

(Abrupt spot stage right, on LENI as she moves into it; light remains on GOEBBELS)

LENI
---enough, Herr Doktor! Valhalla was the home of the gods and I never suggested god-like aspirations---

GOEBBELS
---please, Leni---

LENI
---I *was* a dancer and an actress! My director took our entire crew to the mountains for the new experiments in motion pictures. Herr Hitler had tears in his eyes.

GOEBBELS
Enough!
(Lights go off on LENI) (Aside to audience:)
If we let her go on, this is going to be a long night.
(Pause)

What was I saying? At last, Hitler gave me the authority to decide on what the German public should see. Around the same time, he gave Leni the authority to make films for the party rallies.

Back then, motion pictures weren't new but were a different proposition than they are today---there still was a sense of the marvel or magic of movement itself, onscreen. Sound had just come in not long before we came into power. All sorts of experiments were in the air, including animation, and your Herr Walter Disney seemed to be the master of the form, admired from Argentina to the Soviet Union. In America, he was the only major film producer with any sympathy for our cause. Most of the others were Jews, of course, Adolph

Zukor, Louis B. Mayer, Samuel Goldwyn, Carl Laemmle, and so on. Ironically enough, Charlie Chaplin was one of the few non-Jews in power in Hollywood, along with the United Artists bunch, but he had no time for us.

(Pause)

I mention all of this as we await a major event of our play---that is, the meeting of Walter Disney with our Fuhrer, with me, and Miss Riefenstahl. Ensnared in cinema by 1935, Leni knew where the power was where cinema was concerned---that strange desert area of southern California originally coined 'Hollywoodland' for real estate purposes. Now Hollywood!

(Spot comes up on LENI as before, remains on GOEBBELS, who focuses on her)

LENI

I remember when Josef von Sternberg took Marlene Dietrich to Hollywood. And when our most innovative director, Fritz Lang, abandoned the Fuhrer just when Hitler had asked him to become the official Nazi filmmaker---

GOEBBELS (interrupting)

Lang was summoned to the Chancellery. That night, he packed his bags and managed to get out of Germany. That foul Dietrich and Sternberg already were making films in Hollywood.

(Pause)

We still had Arthur Franck---

LENI (interrupting)

---yes, of course, but Herr Hitler was mortified that commercial cinema was becoming an American phenomenon more than anything else.

GOEBBELS

YOU weren't so mortified, were you?

LENI

Pardon me?

GOEBBELS

By '38, you realised there were some cracks in the Nazi dream, so to speak. Kristallnacht, the so-called Night of Broken Glass, turned the streets of Germany into an anarchic nightmare.

(Projection: Newspaper report of *Kristallnacht*)

True, the Jews were the targets, but they were an integral part of German society, and the destruction of their businesses brought the real threat of depression or chaos back home to us. Meanwhile, our Leni was quickly arranging a trip to Hollywood to see if she could sell her wares there---

LENI

---I already had an international reputation!

GOEBBELS

Is that why no producer would meet with you when you got to Los Angeles?

(Pause)

The studios organized a boycott of you AND your films, but you of course, you knew you had a friend you could count on.

LENI

Yes, I did. Walt Disney held a reception for me, toasting me as a film innovator.

GOEBBELS

Yes.

(LENI exits, her spot dims)

GOEBBELS

But wait---we're getting too far ahead in our story. 1935 was a peak year for the Reich. Our Fuhrer was visited by leaders from around the world, in all sorts of professions, including your politicians, of course. Any self-respecting anti-Semite could get away with such a visit by rationalizing Hitler's glorious transformation of the German economy. It's not too difficult to end years of mass unemployment when you put a sizeable chunk of your population in labor camps. I understand that more than 3% of the American population today is locked in your jails and prisons, but never mind.

(Pause)

This all was going smoothly when we heard that Herr Disney was doing a tour of Europe. His brother, Roy Disney, his business manager, already was scheduled to visit the Fuhrer, but who would have thought that the great Walter Disney himself might make an appearance?

(Spot comes up, where LENI had been, revealing DISNEY)

DISNEY

This is the real story, if you want to know. I was invited along with my wife, Lillian, to receive an award from the League of Nations in Paris, in honour of the international popularity of Mickey Mouse.

GOEBBELS

Yes, of course, the mouse.

DISNEY

We were really thrilled, and as this was my first real vacation in years, we decided to tour Europe. Most of the heads of state in Europe were honored---I say HONORED, Dr. Goebbels, to see us. Including Herr Hitler, whom I have to admit I was a little afraid of.

GOEBBELS

Really?

DISNEY

A lot of what was happening in Germany was told to the press, with your approval. But there were others suggesting that there was another side to this grand experiment.

(Pause)

I didn't know how my visit would be perceived---

GOEBBELS

At home, you mean.

DISNEY

The American Jewish Congress already was protesting to President Roosevelt about the treatment of Jews in Germany---

GOEBBELS

But of course, you knew that no-one was listening.

DISNEY

I didn't know anything of the kind.

(Pause)

In any event, I couldn't care less about politics.

GOEBBELS

Yes, well...in any event, it was hard to get Hitler interested in seeing you, as we shall see.

(Spot dims on DISNEY; he exits)

GOEBBELS

I suddenly feel like a ringleader. But this isn't a circus, it's an introduction and a history lesson. History is for the privileged, as we all know. In 1935, Germany already was re-arming in spite of the terms of the Versailles treaty after the Great War, terms so unfair and preposterous they virtually guaranteed our rise to power. The autobahn, our national highway emulated by your Eisenhower with the interstate system in the 1950s---

(Projection: image of the autobahn)

---was being constructed with the slave labor we acquired by cleansing our society of those who would have liked to see Germany disgraced and shamed into submission forever. Our Fuhrer used the judiciary process brilliantly, it has to be said, so all of our activity was cloaked in legality. None of the outside world interfered. Even the Vatican announced it would do nothing about our internal affairs---

(Projection: image of Pope Pius XI)

(GOEBBELS makes the sign of the cross)

Meanwhile, we made sure that motion pictures were relatively light entertainments to distract the masses, mixed with occasional warnings about the evil still in our midst, the disease, and Marxism and, of course, the Jews---

(Projection: clip from THE ETERNAL JEW)

The moral was clear: a pure Aryan future could be realized as long as we kept vigilant and, of course, in good humour!

Let me see now...

(GOEBBELS peers into audience)

yes, I think that's all you'll need to know before, as they say, the main event. But why tell this story at all?

(Pause)

The Holocaust is old hat, the Fuhrer and Rudolph Hess are back in fashion, secretly, in Europe and America, and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forgery from Russia imagining an international Jew conspiracy, was written before even we turned Jews into---what?

(Pause)

What was I saying? Today, The Protocols are being made into TV movies and documentaries in Arab countries, keeping up the tradition.

(Pause)

As the Fuhrer once said, the greater the lie, the greater people will believe in it.

Walt Disney's visit to Munich was recorded by our major newspaper, the Volkischer Beobachter, and his return from Europe was reported in the New York Times. Alas, we have no record of what the Fuhrer, Disney and, ever the opportunist, Leni Riefenstahl, may have said to each other. Miss Riefenstahl may not even have been there, for all I know. But sometimes the imagination can fill in where history is---how shall I put it?---neglectful.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR:

As ADOLF HITLER and LENI RIEFENSTAHL enter, lights and projection (see below) come up. Spot remains on GOEBBELS, observing them.

A long, elegant table is upstage center. Above the table is a large projection of the vast panorama of the Bavarian Alps seen through the windows of the Berghof retreat.

[Foreground (downstage), in well-lit display, the famous 'Germania' model, much of it designed by Albert Speer. A series of monumental buildings, separated by public squares, smaller buildings, housing, offices, galleries, etc., intended to represent the new capital of the Reich, to be built by 1950.]

LENI RIEFENSTAHL is seated on the table, facing audience, center-stage. ADOLF HITLER kneels in front of her, his head between her legs, his hands on her thighs at each side.

(LENI 'sees' audience, bends to whisper something to HITLER)

(HITLER rises, looks at audience, and 'straightens' his moustache.)

(He slowly walks around the Germania model downstage, regaining his composure)

LENI RIEFENSTAHL (regarding model:)
What *will* Herr Disney think?

ADOLF HITLER
Bitte?

LENI
Wir sprechen Englisch, ja?

HITLER
Ja, ja. Think of what?

LENI
This...model of yours and Speer's of---what do you call it?---*Germania!*

HITLER
I don't know what this Disney will think.

(KRAUS abruptly enters)

KRAUS (to HITLER:)
Herr Goebbels has arrived.

LENI
What is he doing here?

HITLER
I know what you're thinking, Leni. He asked to be invited.

LENI
What am I thinking?

HITLER
Josef seems to be as curious as you are about Herr Disney.

(HITLER comes up to where she is seated, kisses her passionately; as GOEBBELS enters, they abruptly move away from each other)

GOEBBELS
Mein Fuhrer! And Fraulien Riefenstahl! I wasn't expecting you.
(to HITLER, aside)
What is *she* doing here?

HITLER
You both want to meet this Disney, yes?
(Pause; HITLER looks at his watch)
He's very late.

LENI
Americans are always late. Look at the war. They came in at the last moment and claimed victory---

GOEBBELS
---surrender and victory hardly mean the same thing---

LENI
Thank you, Herr Goebbels.

HITLER
With the Jews in waiting.

GOEBBELS

Ja---

LENI

English, bitte.

HITLER

Natürlich! We will not have that discussion.

LENI

What discussion?

HITLER

Mit Herr Disney!

LENI

You mean the war, or the Jews?

HITLER

Nein...nothing political, with someone like him.

GOEBBELS

I agree.

LENI

What makes you say that?

HITLER

Please, Leni.

(LENI kisses HITLER)

LENI

Neither of you know who you are dealing with.

(Pause)

I do not think we'll have any trouble.

HITLER

You know... Herr Walter Disney may be intimidated by a woman.

LENI

Oh I see---is that why you have invited me?

HITLER

I meant that as...compliment. (They kiss)

LENI

I know.

(Pause)

Anyway, we should be ready.

HITLER

Mein Gott...you too? Goebbels has been acting like---he's royalty!

GOEBBELS

Not really. I just recognize the propaganda potential in such a visit.

LENI

Fair enough.

HITLER

Schon gut. I hope I can fathom that mongrel American English he'll be speaking.

LENI

Maybe that will not be an issue. He does come from good stock, so I am told---

(HITLER takes her hand, kisses it)

GOEBBELS (to LENI:)

---you always know how to cheer him up, don't you?

HITLER (to GOEBBELS:)

Josef, please.

LENI

Besides, I like Disney's pictures. They have a true Germanic feel.

GOEBBELS (to LENI)

Germanic?

LENI

Ja...sie lassen die Leute die Welt vergessen. They make people forget the world.

HITLER

That isn't what *your* films do.

GOEBBELS

No, not lately---but in the old days, those melodramas in the Dolomite Mountains!

(LENI glares at GOEBBELS)

HITLER

Josef, behave yourself.

LENI

I'm proud of those experiments.

GOEBBELS

Yes, of course.

LENI

And I can appreciate...Herr Disney's success.

HITLER

What's going on with you two?

(Pause)

Remember, Leni, I regard our Doctor as indispensable.

GOEBBELS

Danka schoen, mein Fuhrer.

HITLER

We couldn't handle the foreign press without you. (to LENI) He stops all of them in their tracks when they start going on about the Reichstag or...the Jews. And his understanding of the betrayal of Versailles---it's all working to create a sympathetic image of Germany abroad. And a noble Germany at home!

GOEBBELS (to LENI:)

I've always known what the Fuhrer has demanded of me, and what he expects of others.

HITLER

Enough, Josef. (to LENI) Ich freue mich, dass Sie hier sind.

(Tr: I am happy that you are here.)

LENI

It will interest me...to see what happens, with Herr Disney.

GOEBBELS

You have your motivation.

LENI

What does that mean? (to HITLER:) What is he saying?

HITLER

Let's get back to Disney. What does he think of the Jews?

GOEBBELS

You mean in Hollywood?

(Pause)

They aren't exactly fond of him. Herr Disney keeps his distance.

LENI

I wonder---

GOEBBELS

Oh, Fraulein, you'd trade allegiances at the drop of a *script*, wouldn't you?

LENI

I am not here to be insulted!

HITLER

All right, both of you---

(Interrupting, KRAUS enters)

HITLER

What is it, Kraus?

KRAUS

Herr Disney ist angekommen.

LENI

He's on his way!

HITLER

Dankeschoen, Herr Kraus. Have him wait when he comes.

(LENI and KRAUS adjust the table, etc., for DISNEY's appearance. GOEBBELS observes them, looks at the audience as if it were a mirror, adjusts his tie, etc.)

LENI

I must tell you what I think. Herr Disney could be our foot in the door in the American industry. Eventually, everyone will be looking to American cinema for inspiration. They seem to be able to make anything and get anyone to watch what they do.

HITLER

What makes you say that?

LENI

Have you ever watched an audience watching a motion picture, especially from America? They become hypnotized, even if the picture is a bad one. Especially if it's a bad one! The producers in Hollywood know that better than anyone else---

GOEBBELS

---you have a point---

LENI

---of course, I have little time for his cartoons, but he's something of a magician. And if you want to know about the Hollywood system, which may one day dominate our world, I assure you, Disney's our Mensch!

HITLER

Yes, I know. What did you call him, Josef? 'Our man in Hollywood.'

(Lights come up at stage right where KRAUS is seated at a desk, awaiting DISNEY, while remaining up centerstage where HITLER and LENI are holding hands and GOEBBELS regards the model)

LENI

His cartoons were banned for years here, because of one where some sort of animal---a duck, I think---ridiculed the Kaiser.

HITLER

Really? (Pause) Eine Ente?

(They both smile)

LENI

Hard to take such things seriously.

(HITLER goes over to a phonograph and puts on a recording...the Prelude to Wagner's *Die Meistersingers*. Carried away as the music begins, HITLER pretends to 'conduct' it, facing audience. GOEBBELS looks at him with some awe.)

(LENI abruptly cuts the music off)

HITLER (annoyed, over to LENI)

I want to know what brings this Disney here, what's on his mind.

GOEBBELS

Fraulein Riefenstahl, please be careful.

LENI

If we receive Herr Disney, and he goes back with a favorable impression, he might help to counter all the muck they're writing about us in America.

HITLER

I don't care about that.

GOEBBELS

Let's think of this as an opportunity, yes?

(With Kraus as his desk, WALT DISNEY appears. He pauses, looks around KRAUS's office. GOEBBELS moves toward them, while still eying HITLER and LENI. Lights remain up centerstage, HITLER and LENI fondling each other)

KRAUS

May I help you?

DISNEY

I hope so.

(Pause)

Geez...I could *use* that kind of music.

KRAUS

What music?

DISNEY

The music I just heard...not for something comic, not with the duck or Mickey or anything...something with a little...*class!*

(LENI and HITLER smile and kiss. GOEBBELS sits at a center chair at background of table.)

KRAUS
Herr Disney?

DISNEY
I presume, yes. (He smiles)

(KRAUS shakes his hand)

KRAUS
How do you do?

DISNEY
Well, I guess. You?

KRAUS
I'm sorry?

(Pause; GOEBBELS looks amusedly over at LENI and HITLER)

LENI (to HITLER, indicating DISNEY has arrived)
Er ist da!

DISNEY (to KRAUS)
How do YOU do?

KRAUS
We've been expecting you.

(DISNEY and LENI stand in waiting; Leni combs her hair; HITLER adjusts himself. GOEBBELS, seated, pays little attention.)

DISNEY (to KRAUS)
What's your name?

KRAUS
My...nommen, yes. Kraus. Hel...mut

DISNEY
Kraus Helmut.

KRAUS
Helmut Kraus.

(From center area, GOEBBELS nods in disbelief)

DISNEY
Of course, yes.

(Pause)

DISNEY
Look, Mister Kraus, I don't mean to be bothersome.

(Pause)
I don't know how I should address Mister Hitler...your 'Fuhrer' as you call him.

KRAUS
I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

DISNEY
I mean, 'Mein Fuhrer'? Herr Chancellor?

(Pause; Kraus is impatient)

KRAUS
Herr Hitler will...suffice.

DISNEY
Suffice! Thank you! (Pause) 'Herr Hitler.'

KRAUS
Precisely.

DISNEY
I'm just not knowledgeable about such things.

KRAUS
No. I understand.

HITLER
Kraus?

KRAUS
Mein Fuhrer?

HITLER
You may send him in.

(DISNEY is lead by KRAUS, brought into the main room to meet HITLER)

KRAUS (to HITLER)
Mein Fuhrer, Dr Goebbels, Fraulein Riefenstahl...bitte schoen...Herr Disney.

(DISNEY rushes over to shake HITLER's hand)

DISNEY
I'm honored!

HITLER
Yes, of course.

DISNEY (looks to LENI. who is seated at table in bg., toward audience)
I didn't expect such a reception.

HITLER
Ja...I introduce Fraulein...Leni Riefenstahl. She is ein filmmaker. And Dr Josef Goebbels.

DISNEY
Thank you, thank you.
(They greet each other)
(Pause; to HITLER)
Mind if I sit down?

HITLER
Please. Kraus, bitte. (HITLER indicates chair at other end of table, invites DISNEY to sit; KRAUS seats him, then exits)

(HITLER and DISNEY are seated at opposite sides of a long table between the model in fg and the Berghof window in bg)

(LENI sits close to HITLER, holding his hand. GOEBBELS watches from seat centerstage, bg)

DISNEY

Thank you for such an audience. I know your motion pictures, Miss Riefenstahl. And it's more than a pleasure to meet you, Dr Goebbels.

LENI
Thank you.

GOEBBELS (to DISNEY)
More than a pleasure?

DISNEY (to HITLER)
I'm a bit flustered, I must say.... I don't know if that was proper, I mean, shaking your hand like that.

HITLER
Not to worry.

DISNEY
Protocol.

LENI
You're doing fine.

DISNEY
Some situations make me uneasy.

LENI
Situations? (to HITLER:) Unbequeme lagen.

HITLER
Ja...natürlich.
(Pause)
Herr Disney, with respect...what is it you want to see me about?

DISNEY
Well, I've been traveling through Europe and, as we're here, Lilly and I, my wife, we thought I should come to see you.

GOEBBELS
You were in Paris, invited by League of Nations...to receive award, ja?

DISNEY

Ja, I mean...yes. Absolutely. In Paris. For...Mickey.

HITLER

You received an award?

DISNEY

They gave me an award, yes, absolutely.

LENI

You could say---

HITLER

Excuse me?

LENI (translating, to HITLER)

Eine Auszeichnung für Die Maus!

HITLER (smiles)

What was this award for, exactly?

DISNEY

The mouse! He's become an international celebrity!

GOEBBELS

Der Maus.

DISNEY

The mouse, yes. It is extraordinary.

(LENI smiles, begins to laugh)

(KRAUS enters far left; stands expectantly; DISNEY glares at him)

HITLER (to DISNEY)

Herr Disney, you would care for some...sherry?

DISNEY

Sherry? Yes, of course. Thank you. Thank you, Herr Hitler.

HITLER (to KRAUS:)

Einen Sherry bringen, Herr Kraus.

KRAUS
Ja, Mein Fuhrer.

DISNEY (to KRAUS)
Thank you.

(KRAUS exits, returns with rolling tray with sherry carafe, glasses, etc. He pours sherry for each guest and then exits, leaving tray. DISNEY eyes him warily)

GOEBBELS
I should think the League of Nations would have more important things to...concern themselves with, yes?

(HITLER and LENI smile)

DISNEY
You'd think so, but there it is. Anyway, while I was there, I mean, while I'm here, in Germany...in Europe, I thought I ought to pay my regards. I haven't been here since the war.

(LENI and HITLER glance with amusement at each other)

DISNEY
Herr Hitler, I can't tell you how impressed I am. I know the economic situation took a lot out of Germany, and now---it's remarkable to see what's happened in the last couple of years.

HITLER
Ja, thank you.

(Pause)

DISNEY
Funny how...everything seems so clean...so green! Enchanting.

HITLER
Thank you.

DISNEY
We went to the edge of the Black Forest yesterday, Lilly and me. You know, she really thought it was something to write home about.

(HITLER looks quizzically at LENI)

LENI (translating for Hitler)
Sie schatzte es war wirklich etwas Besonderes.

HITLER
Natürlich.

DISNEY
And we saw Munich, and um...Hannover. So peaceful, natural---

HITLER
We have our standards---

DISNEY
And everyone seems so healthy, so---

GOEBBELS
--- physical health is the cornerstone of our social order, Herr Disney.

DISNEY
Of course, yes.

HITLER
Ja.

DISNEY
Amazing.

LENI
What is amazing?

DISNEY
Well, for one thing...I'd always thought Germany had become so...
fragile...weakened...compromised, I mean---

HITLER
We *were* compromised, to use your word.

GOEBBELS
Germany suffered as it never had before. Everything had been turned around.
You'd walk down the street in Berlin and not know where to look, everything

made us feel a sense of shame, to be Germans! Old women, young veterans begging. And the Jews making the most of this---

DISNEY

Yes, I understand.

HITLER

We were betrayed, Herr Disney.

DISNEY

And now you're getting back at the them, so to speak. We've heard. My lawyer, Gunther Lessing, tells me everything. He's quite an admirer.

GOEBBELS

What is his name?

DISNEY

Gunther...Gunther Lessing.

HITLER

Back then, after the war, we found ourselves lost in our own deceptions. Some people know how to take advantage of such a...situation. In the years after the war we were looking inward, always, reflecting against our own image, but now we are prepared to face the world again, now we see ourselves with pride, once again.

GOEBBELS

Ja.

DISNEY

That's important.

(HITLER begins to walk around the Germania model, seeming bored with DISNEY)

HITLER

I understand, from Dr Goebbels, you make pictures for children.

DISNEY

You could say that.

GOEBBELS

And what else?

DISNEY

Pardon?

LENI (to DISNEY)

What do you say to them?

DISNEY

Oh. (Pause) Nothing earth-shattering...nothing like your films, if I may say, Miss Riefenstahl.

(Pause; to LENI)

I've seen some of those mountain films in America.

LENI

Did you enjoy them?

GOEBBELS

I'm sure he did.

DISNEY

Incredible, weren't they? So true to life.

LENI

Most were years ago, of course. Before the new sound.

(Pause)

I am acquainted with your...cartoons, Herr Disney.

HITLER

We have seen some of them.

DISNEY

For me, my pictures are simple enough. I tell my stories with, you know...figures.

LENI (to Hitler)

Ja...figuren.

HITLER (holding LENI'S hand)

Fraulein Riefenstahl prepares now our film of the Olympic Games, in Berlin.

DISNEY

That has to be quite a challenge.

LENI

I mean the entire production to be...a celebration of the physical body in space. A poetry of the physical in motion, and a way of seeing our humanity as a reflection of the best in nature, the example of a kind of perfection never before possible.

LENI (to HITLER)

Eine Feier des Körpers im Weltraum.

GOEBBELS (to DISNEY)

Fraulein Riefenstahl is nothing if not ambitious.

HITLER

Natürlich---

GOEBBELS

I can see it now. The Olympics as a kind of...grand opera.

LENI

That's not what I mean, Herr Doctor!

(HITLER holds her hand, consoling)

GOEBBELS

We were talking of your pictures, Herr Disney.

DISNEY

Were we? (Pause) Oh...OK, well...children are impressionable, as you know, (towards HITLER and LENI:) wide-eyed, you might say. They want to be transported---to somewhere exciting. You have to guide them along.

(GOEBBELS and HITLER stare at each other for a moment.)

HITLER

That's quite an ambition.

DISNEY

Thank you. (to LENI:) Fraulein Riefenstahl, do you really like my pictures?

LENI

I have a very different attitude, I think, toward film, but can see the value of what you do.

HITLER

Ja, ja. (suddenly angry, to LENI:) Was will er jetzt? (*Tr.: What does he want?*)

LENI (translating, for DISNEY)

Herr Hitler wants to know if...there is some other reason for your visit, to us.

(Pause)

Something you may want.

(HITLER now is involved in looking at the model; LENI and DISNEY watch him move toward it)

DISNEY (looking at model)

This model is magnificent, Herr Hitler, it looks a little like a Hollywood set.

GOEBBELS (to DISNEY)

The architect was Albert Speer, guided along by the Fuhrer himself, of course. Speer and Hitler appreciated the monumentalism of the Romans and Greeks, and wanted not only to match them, stone for stone, but construct buildings ten or twenty times the size of the classical structures. It occurs to me that your architects in Washington had the same attraction to the grandiose.

DISNEY

I wouldn't know. This does look like Washington, a little.

GOEBBELS (to DISNEY)

You're not acquainted with our struggle.

DISNEY

I think I have some idea.

HITLER

This model is a representation of the future of Germany.

(Pause)

All of our efforts are being directed to realizing this model...as something more than a symbol, an actual location, where nature, religion and culture meet: the apex of a new world!

DISNEY

Come to think of it, it does look like Washington...these things over here...these buildings...and here---

(DISNEY bends down and touches the model; HITLER is annoyed)

HITLER (to LENI:)
What does he think he's doing?

GOEBBELS
Herr Disney?

DISNEY
Yes?

LENI
What are you doing?

DISNEY
Just looking.
(Pause)
Gosh...you even have something that looks like...the White House!

LENI (to HITLER:)
Er spricht über das Weiße Haus.

(LENI and HITLER smile)

GOEBBELS
The home of your President.

DISNEY
Exactly.

(DISNEY kneels at the model)

DISNEY
I don't know if you know this, Herr Disney, Dr Goebbels...but...your movement has quite a following in America...you are appreciated there.

GOEBBELS
Und...so?

DISNEY

You have a lot of admirers, fellow travellers, if you like. I've been to Bund rallies in Los Angeles myself. The Jews, among others, want to start a war again. I'm not sure why.

GOEBBELS

You must have some inkling of their worldwide agenda. On the one hand, they pretend to be socialists, and on the other they're clever bankers and swindlers. It's a game that's been going on for years. In Europe we may be more aware of ---how the game is played.

DISNEY

America is not unaware of what you call the Jewish agenda. We're just coming to grips with it in a different way. Too many of us are not about to tolerate their attraction to some sort of offensive, while they wait for war to break out and spread their embellished stories of atrocities. And they push the damn unions--- I've had to deal with this myself, at my studio---

HITLER

But here, in Germany---tell me, Herr Disney, what's being said of what we have done.

DISNEY

People I meet everywhere seem to admire what you've accomplished.

LENI

Really?

(Pause)

DISNEY (sighs)

I'm sorry, forgive me.

(Pause)

Usually...I always have to keep things to myself, I mean---

HITLER

You have to be so cautious.

DISNEY

In America, yes. Consider the nature of my industry, the people I have to contend with. The Zukors, the Mayers...Sam Goldwyn, the Warners. And that damn Jew at Universal. They're even trying to take people away from me! One of my animators just went over to Columbia!

GOEBBELS

But here you can say what you like.

DISNEY

True enough. (He looks suspiciously at KRAUS)

HITLER

Why do you look at Kraus that way?

DISNEY

I'm sorry. One of those faces.

HITLER

Kraus has been my comrade since the war. He is a reliable and dedicated adjutant.

HITLER

You were in Europe before, yes?

DISNEY

During the war. With the Red Cross, yeah.

LENI (to HITLER:)

Mit das Rote Kreuz.

HITLER

Ja...where was this?

DISNEY

Alsace-Lorraine, mostly.

HITLER

Beautiful country.

DISNEY

Not then. (Pensively) Not then it wasn't.

HITLER

I was there as well, Alsace-Lorraine.

DISNEY
You don't say?

HITLER
I am saying this.

