

The
Dictator's
Slippers

by Peter Howard

A Play in Two Acts



THE DICTATOR'S
SLIPPERS

By

PETER HOWARD

LONDON
BLANDFORD PRESS

FIRST PUBLISHED DECEMBER 1954
BY BLANDFORD PRESS, LTD.,
16 WEST CENTRAL STREET, LONDON. W.1

Copyright 1954 by Peter Howard

*No performance of this play may be given without
the written permission of the author*

PRINTED IN ENGLAND BY
W. & J. MACKAY & CO. LTD., CHATHAM

INTRODUCTION

In June, 1954, conferences were in session at both ends of the Lake of Geneva. At one end, in Geneva itself, the Asian Conference and the Conference of the International Labour Organisation were taking place. At the other end of the lake at Caux, Dr. Frank Buchman had recently opened the 1954 World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament.

Der Bund, the Berne newspaper, wrote in an editorial contrasting these conferences, "At best all that can come out of Geneva is a compromise, which can moderate deadly passions for a time without curing the fundamental differences. In Caux hatred is not appeased but actually overcome. There, there is a living ideology at work which finds agreement and understanding at every level of life."

Many delegates to Geneva visited the Caux Assembly. There they saw some of the plays of Peter Howard, of which Elizabeth Bergner recently said, "They are the most intelligent plays in the world today. They are the theatre of tomorrow." Some of the delegates to the Asian Conference were so impressed by these plays that they arranged for a series of showings of *The Dictator's Slippers* for delegates to the Geneva conferences.

The audiences were crowded with delegates from Asia, among them representatives from the Chinese People's Republic, from Africa and from America as well as from Europe. Simultaneous translations of the play into Chinese,

INTRODUCTION

French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish made it possible for this varied international audiences to follow the play.

On the opening night, the Ethiopian Delegate to the Asian Conference introduced the play and its author to the audience. He spoke of having seen the play at Caux. "It carried the conviction of truth," he said. "It spoke to us individually and it united our opinions. It puts truth so clearly that it leaves no confusion. It brings a new language to Geneva that speaks to the hearts of all."

He then introduced the author, Mr. Peter Howard, who outlined the basic programme of Moral Re-Armament which lies behind the play. He said:

"Thirty-five years ago Dr. Frank Buchman, the initiator of Moral Re-Armament, saw that we were not just at the end of a war between great powers, but at the point of the breakdown of civilisation and the start of the greatest revolutionary era in human history.

"He did not stop at diagnosis. He built an answer that works, that is tried and tested. And he built a force of men and women to carry it to the world.

"The programme of MRA is not anti-Communist nor anti-capitalist, not anti-American nor anti-Russian. It is for all men everywhere. It fights on a world front for the full dimension of change—social, political, economic, national and supernational change, all based on a change in human nature."

The following day the Government delegate from the Philippines, Congressman R. T. Lim, was addressing the

INTRODUCTION

ILO Conference at a crowded session in the League of Nations Hall. In the course of his speech he said, "I am at the moment reminded of the play I saw last night, entitled *The Dictator's Slippers*. It was a wonderful play. It was playing out the purpose of the Moral Re-Armament Conference which has the objective of changing human nature itself. It sounds impossible, but I believe it could be done after listening to the actors in the play."

The Philippine delegate continued, "What we need here in Geneva is moral re-armament, because we look at each other in this Conference with suspicion, fear and hatred. While we are caught between the two ideologies, communism and democracy, fighting one another, many of our purposes in the ILO will be defeated. Our only hope is in the Moral Re-Armament programme."

CHARACTERS

ADAMANT	The Dictator whose unseen presence dominates the play
SATURN	The Minister of Interior and Chief of Police in ADAMANT's country
DR. HIPPOCRAT	ADAMANT's personal physician
BULLBLUFF	From Britain
IRASCA	From Africa
DESSTANI	From India
POLYGLOT	Who possesses eighteen passports and is at home in many lands
THE PRISONER	
GUARDS AND MALE SECRETARIES	

Time: The present

Place: A country living under a dictatorship

ACT I

ACT I

The scene is the study of His Excellency Mr. Saturn, Minister of Interior and Chief of Police. It is a spacious room, but austere rather than luxurious. There are a few comfortable chairs, a table around which business can be transacted, a bookcase filled with revolutionary literature, and over the fireplace a portrait of Adamant looking as unyielding as his name. There is also a desk where Saturn takes decisions and gives directions that affect the life and death of millions. As the curtain rises, however, His Excellency the Minister of Interior is in a more leisured mood. He is sitting relaxed in a chair, his belt unbuckled, reading a detective story and drinking some short drink. After a few moments, a light flashes red on the desk. He rises from his comfort and goes towards the desk. He presses a switch on the talking box apparatus which stands there, and says :

SATURN Yes ?

VOICE FROM BOX Is that Saturn, Chief of Police ?

SATURN Yes, it is. Speak up, man. What is it ?

VOICE Dr. Hippocrat, Personal Physician to Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, is asking to see you, Excellency.

SATURN Has he been searched for weapons, according to regulations ?

VOICE Searched as usual, Excellency. Nothing found.

SATURN Bring him up in one minute.

(He switches off the talking box, presses a buzzer on his desk and is rapidly buckling his belt and tidying his papers as a servant enters)

SATURN Clear the table, quickly.

(Servant obeys and vanishes. Saturn puts detective story away, carefully marking the place. Saturn is sitting poised in an attitude of power as the sound of feet is heard outside his door and the command "Escort—halt!" There is a knock)

SATURN Enter.

(Enter armed guards with Dr. Hippocrat, who is carrying a briefcase. Guard halts as Saturn rises.)

DR. HIPPOCRAT Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

SATURN Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

DR. HIPPOCRAT I have for you this morning two personal instructions.

SATURN Sit down.

(As Dr. H. sits, Saturn presses another buzzer on his desk and his personal assistant and secretary enters)

SATURN *(To the secretary)* Dr. Hippocrat has two personal instructions from Adamant. Be prepared to take notes and then instant action.

SECRETARY Yes, Excellency.

SATURN *(To Dr. H.)* Proceed.

DR. H. *(Who has by now opened his briefcase and taken out two slips of paper. He reads from the first)* Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, agrees to the memorandum of Saturn, Minister of Interior and Chief of Police, on the subject of political detentions in the Granite Prison. Instruct the Governor of the Granite Prison immediately.

SATURN (*To secretary*) Got that ?

SECRETARY Yes, Excellency.

SATURN Draft instructions and deliver to Governor of Granite Prison this morning. (*To Dr. H.*) What next ?

DR. H. (*Reading from his second slip of paper*) Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, desires a copy of the full private file concerning our Ambassador in India. He wishes the file to be sent to him in two sections. Section 1—all that is known. Section 2—all that has been suggested by the Ambassador's enemies, or suspected by your own police force at any point in the Ambassador's career.

SATURN Do you wish this file sent directly to the clinic, or will you wait and carry it yourself ?

DR. H. My instructions are to wait and carry it to Adamant personally.

SATURN (*To secretary*) Prepare copies of the file immediately.

SECRETARY Yes, Excellency. (*Exit*)

SATURN Anything else ?

DR. H. Nothing.

SATURN I have some private matters of State to discuss with you. Is this a suitable moment ?

DR. H. Certainly. I have to wait in any case for the file on the Ambassador in India.

SATURN (*Pressing a switch until a green light goes on and then speaking into the talking box*) Mount guards outside this room.

VOICE Mount guards outside your room, Excellency.

(*Saturn switches off*)

SATURN (*To guards*) Guards withdraw.

(*The guards march out leaving Saturn and Dr. H. alone. As soon as they are alone together the metallic martial atmosphere changes and they talk as friends*)

SATURN Would you like a drink ? (*Dr. H. nods his head*) The usual ? (*Dr. H. nods again*)

SATURN (*Presses buzzer on desk and as servant enters, says*) Bring two brandies. (*Looking at Dr. H. who nods vigorously. Exit servant*) Just tell me one thing, Doctor. Do these fellows really search you for weapons each morning you come ? I mean, do they make a thorough job of it ?

DR. H. I touch my hat to you, Saturn. You really have trained them well. One morning they even found a tablespoon in my pocket and took it away from me. I suppose they thought I was going to hit you on the head with it or something.

SATURN (*Laughs—then suddenly suspicious*) What exactly were you going to do with the tablespoon ?

DR. H. Oh, nothing ! I just put it in my pocket at breakfast absent-mindedly.

SATURN. Absent-mindedness is dangerous in a doctor.

DR. H. Possibly. But not so dangerous as being so efficient you think you know everything.

SATURN Anyway, the guards are right to be careful. You'd be amazed how many people seem to hate me.

DR. H. You know, Saturn, if I'd hated you, I doubt very much if I would have held you upside down by your

ankles and slapped the wind into you the night you were born—let me see, forty-three years ago exactly, isn't it ?

SATURN (*Laughing*) No, forty-four. Things have certainly changed in the world since then.

(*Both men stiffen again in their attitude as the servant enters with the brandy*)

SATURN Put it on the table. (*Servant does so and goes*)
(*To Dr. H.*) Help yourself, Doctor.

(*They both take the brandy, lift them towards each other and say instinctively together before they drink*) Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples ! (*They set down the tankards, and after a pause*)

SATURN Now, that's exactly the point, Doctor. How long is Adamant going to live ?

DR. H. (*Looking suddenly watchful and wary*) Only five people in the country know he is ill. You and I are two of them. May the Comrade of all the Peoples live for ever.

SATURN Can't you trust me ? Can't you tell me the truth ?

DR. H. The truth ? (*He walks up and down as he says*) Look here, Saturn, Adamant is vigorous, healthy, strong—amazingly so for a man of his age and activity. That's the story I would tell the world, and tell you too. (*Suddenly unbending*) And for all I know it may be the truth. You can't be a doctor for as long as I have been without realising how wrong you can be about life and death.

SATURN What do you really think ?

DR. H. Mentally he is as alert as ever. More so if anything. Physically—well, if he were an ordinary man like you and

me—or at any rate (*Looking at Saturn and smiling*) like me, I'd say that he might go today, he might live for years, but that his friends should be ready for the worst.

SATURN (*After a long pause for thought*) Thank you for telling me the facts, Doctor. (*Stands up*) Now look here. I have got to see Adamant.

(*Dr. H. shakes his head*)

I tell you I *must*. Why can't I ?

DR. H. For two reasons. The first is that he has given specific orders he is to see no one. You know he has his share of vanity. Illness has changed him considerably. He has shrunk. He wants to be thought of like *that*, (*Pointing to the portrait*) not as he is today. Seriously, Saturn, if he knew I had said to you the things I have said already, tomorrow morning I would arrive with special instructions to you from Adamant to put me in the Granite Prison and have me liquidated.

SATURN What's the other reason ?

DR. H. (*Seriously and slowly*) His illness is deadly and contagious. He knows it. He would not like to endanger the lives of his friends, and especially the life of a revolutionary comrade that he trusts as much as he trusts you.

SATURN What about you ?

DR. H. I don't know. Doctors become immunised to illness after spending a lifetime with it. Anyway, I haven't caught anything from Adamant yet.

SATURN. It's a colossal responsibility, Doctor. Do you realise, you are his only link with the world ? (*Suddenly turning on*

him) Are you sure he is getting all the attention that medical science can give him? No absent-mindedness?

DR. H. We've consulted every specialist in every continent. You needn't worry about that. You see, I am under no illusions. (*As Saturn looks surprised*) Look what happened to the doctors who attended the last Comrade of all the Peoples. It's a wonderful stimulus to a doctor's skill to know that he will only outlive his patient by a day or so. You know what it is and why it is, Saturn. Doctors get to know too much. They can't be allowed to survive their patient when their patient happens to be the dictator of a nation. (*Chuckling*) I suppose in the course of my career I *have* lost the lives of a good many patients, through tiredness, or carelessness or just plain pretending to know what was wrong when I didn't. But not Adamant. Not on your life—at least, not on my life. I look after him exactly as carefully as I look after myself—and that's pretty carefully, I can tell you.

SATURN Do you really believe what you're saying?

DR. H. Go on with you! You know it's true. The day Adamant goes, you will have to get rid of me—if you can catch me. And I shan't bear you the slightest ill-will for it.

SATURN I'm amazed how calmly you take it. I hope it won't happen this way, Doctor, but I'm afraid it's very likely true.

DR. H. Of course, Saturn, *you* might succeed Adamant yourself some day. Have you ever thought of that?

SATURN Yes, all of us have. Though we are afraid to admit it.

DR. H. Perhaps if you did you'd spare the life of an old friend like me ? (*Chuckling*) Especially as without my slapping the wind into you the night you were born, you'd never have drawn breath at all, you rascal.

SATURN Perhaps I would. Honestly, Doctor, I hope I would. But I'm not sure. None of us can be sure what we will do as the situation changes.

DR. H. (*Smiling*) Well, if I have to be put out of the world, I'd just as soon the job were done by someone I brought into the world. There's a sort of rough justice about that somewhere.

SATURN I hope I never have to do it. I'd be afraid of the top place, Doctor. That's the truth. I'd rather have all the power of a Number Two with none of the responsibility of a Number One. I've sometimes wondered whether Adamant realised that. He's certainly given me a position where I could pull most people down if I chose. But fear always wins the struggle with ambition in my stomach. I've been like that ever since I was a kid. How do you get rid of fear, Doctor ? You seem to have done the trick.

DR. H. Yes, I'm not afraid. After you've seen people die time and time again, something in you dies too. You lose feelings about others—and finally about yourself. (*After a pause*) Of course, in the old days they said God would get rid of fear.

SATURN God! Hah—you've got *that*, have you? That's forbidden.

DR. H. It's a dope and a drug and a danger to the people. Of

course, that's what I would say if I were talking to His Excellency the Minister of Interior and Chief of Police.

SATURN What would you say if you were talking to the old friend you brought into the world ?

DR. H. Then I'd say I don't know. I just don't know. And I don't really much care. Your father prayed the night you were born. He prayed for a son. Many of the patients used to pray in those days before the revolution. I can remember thinking about your father, "You pray and I'll do the work." And he did and I did. You were a son and you were born healthy, normal, strong. He thought his prayer did the job. I know my slap on the back to draw your first breath did the job as far as you were concerned.

SATURN Do you think there is anything in God at all ?

DR. H. (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Oh, I don't know! Look at the nations with God. They talk mighty big. They turn their noses in the air as if we were a bad smell. They say we have our purges, our liquidations, our brain-washing—and so we do. But they have their wars and kill their millions. They have their unemployment and starve their tens of thousands. They have their savage indifference to poverty, and they are all so sure they are all so good. God ? It's not like an illness. Illness does things to you. If you have cancer, you die. If you have arthritis, you suffer. Even if you have chicken-pox, you come out in spots and you know you've got them. But if you have God it doesn't seem to make any difference either way. So how can I know whether I've got it or whether there's anything in it at all ?

(The light flashes red on the desk. Saturn presses a switch on the talking box and says)

SATURN Yes ?

VOICE Is that Saturn, Chief of Police ?

SATURN Speak up. What is it ?

VOICE Mr. Bullbluff from Britain, Mr. Irasca from Africa, Mr. Desstani from Asia and Mr. Polyglot to see you, Excellency. By appointment.

SATURN Have they been searched for weapons according to the regulations. ?

VOICE Searched as usual, Excellency. Mr. Polyglot handed us for safe-keeping a revolver which he always carries. Otherwise nothing found.

SATURN Bring them up in two minutes. *(He switches off the talking box, presses a buzzer on his desk and says to Dr. H.)* I have sent for these men to come. I have serious business to discuss with them. Can you wait downstairs until your files are ready for Adamant ?

(Dr. H. nods and servant enters)

SATURN *(To servant)* Prepare the room.

(Servant begins to gather up the beer tankards and cake remnants)

SATURN Take Dr. Hippocrat downstairs. Have him wait. I will see you before you leave.

(Exit servant with Dr. H. and tray. Saturn darts to the desk and just has time to arrange himself impressively at it when once more feet are heard marching outside his door and the command "Escort, halt !" There is a knock)

SATURN Yes :

(Enter armed guards with Bullbluff, Irasca, Desstani and Polyglot. Bullbluff looks rather like a jovial commercial traveller. He wears a bowler hat and black suit. Irasca is dressed in the panoply of a chief, and his eyes and presence command the scene. Desstani is in khaki, Polyglot wears a grey suit, grey trilby and looks like a smart and successful city man. Guard halts as Saturn rises)

SATURN Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

BULLBLUFF

IRASCA

DESSANI

POLYGLOT

(In unison) Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

(Saturn greets each in turn)

SATURN Bullbluff, Irasca, Desstani—good to see you, Polyglot.

I hope all of you had a pleasant journey.

BULLBLUFF Comrade Saturn, we had a fine trip. But can I sit down ? My corns are playing up something terrible.

SATURN *(Imperturbably)* Sit down.

(They pick their chairs. Bullbluff grabs the nearest and most comfortable chair, relaxes into it with a grunt)

BULLBLUFF Comrade Saturn, may I take off my shoes ? *(Before an answer can be given he does so)* It's this hellish climate. Every time you send for me, I know I am in for it with my corns and this heat.

SATURN I have sent for you all to discuss a matter of the utmost secrecy and the highest importance. I thank you for coming so promptly.

(Presses a switch until a green light goes on and then speaking into the talking box)

SATURN Mount guard outside this room.

VOICE Mount guard outside your room, Excellency.

SATURN Disturb us on no account until the files of the Indian Ambassador are ready for Dr. Hippocrat. Then let me know.

VOICE Do not disturb until files for Dr. Hippocrat are ready, Excellency.

(Saturn switches off)

SATURN *(To guards)* Guards withdraw.

(The guards march out. Saturn presses buzzer for servant)

SATURN I expect you would like something to drink.

BULLBLUFF Don't mind if I do. *(To servant who has entered)* Bring me a whisky. It keeps out this damned heat.

IRASCA *(Shaking his head. His voice is deep, slow and resonant)* I need no bottle to light a fire inside *my* belly. I and my people have a fire within that has been smouldering for years, for centuries. Now it is ablaze.

(Desstani just holds up his hand and shakes his head)

POLYGLOT A glass of light dry sherry if you have it. And some biscuits. I need food.

(Exit servant)

SATURN Let us sit down. I want you men to give me the closest attention. The matter we have to discuss is one that affects the whole future of the cause we serve.

(Servant enters, hands round drinks, and leaves silently and

rapidly, as the men take their places round Saturn. Bullbluff leaves his shoes by the arm-chair)

BULLBLUFF Comrade, what's all this about? Out with it!

SATURN We call each other comrades. Can we call each other friends?

POLYGLOT Friends! What exactly do you mean by that? You say it with such a queer, intense, bourgeois intonation—friends!

IRASCA Every man who hates injustice is *my* friend. And every man who disregards it is my enemy.

BULLBLUFF Out with it, Saturn, old boy! What's this all about?

SATURN Then tell me this. How much exactly does this revolution of ours mean to you?

BULLBLUFF	}	(In chorus) How much? What on earth do you mean?
DESTANI		
IRASCA		
POLYGLOT		

POLYGLOT The success of the revolution is inevitable throughout the world. History proves it. It is the whole of our life. You know that.

BULLBLUFF Look here, I've been in gaol three times for the cause. I've suffered.

IRASCA Two of my brothers and my mother too were shot by the bullets of the Imperialists before my eyes.

DESTANI (*Who is always quiet, deferential and formal*) Excellency, fifteen years of my life have been spent so far in prison. I would be glad to spend the rest of my life there too if that would help our cause.

POLYGLOT How about you, Saturn ? Surely you're not going to tell us *you* have developed deviationist doubts ? You may not have spent time in gaol yourself, Saturn. But you've sent tens of thousands there. And you've liquidated—well, how many have you liquidated ?

SATURN I do not know. I still do not like it. But I do it. It is for the cause. No, comrades, I am not a deviationist. I have gone too far, like the rest of you, to think of turning back.

BULLBLUFF (*Always restless when things are happening that he does not understand, which is one reason why he is so often restless*) What the hell's all this about ? Spit it out, Saturn ! What's on your mind ?

SATURN I have in this house Dr. Hippocrat, personal physican and counsellor to Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

POLYGLOT (*Urgently and swiftly*) Is Adamant ill ?

SATURN Long live Adamant. May he live for ever. You shall hear Dr. Hippocrat's report before you leave this house.

IRASCA Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples. But do not let us think for a moment that the life or death of one man, even Adamant himself, is going to halt our course.

SATURN Let's be sure of that. It's the very thing I want to talk over with you. Is it agreed that nothing we say here is ever repeated again outside this room ?

ALL Agreed.

SATURN Very well then. Let's face facts in the true spirit of the revolution. You remember ten years ago when the last Comrade of all the Peoples died ? (*All nod*) Adamant

was one of six men who might have become the leader of the revolution. Adamant is still with us, where are all the rest ?

(All look somewhat uneasily and doubtfully at each other)

SATURN I will tell you. They are all gone. Every one of them. Adamant just couldn't risk a rival at that stage of the game.

POLYGLOT Saturn, this is dangerous talk. If it were any other man than yourself I would not have believed it. The cause demanded the liquidation of those men.

SATURN Exactly. I fully agree with you. I myself carried out Adamant's orders on the matter. I'd do it again too. But the point I want to make is, when Adamant's time comes one of you in this room will be his successor. What is going to happen to the rest of us ?

(All look at each other as the full meaning of what Saturn says breaks in upon them. Bullbluff passes an uneasy hand around his collar and stares suspiciously at Irasca and Polyglot)

DESSTANI Excellency, death is but an incident, an episode. If I may say so, some of you comrades from the West take it far too seriously.

SATURN No, it's not that, Desstani. Death doesn't worry me, at least not much. I'm afraid of many things, but I'm not afraid to die. *(He says it in such a way that they believe him)* I am afraid of the set-back to the revolution, if after Adamant goes, we start to intrigue and quarrel about who is the man to step into his slippers. Look here. Last time, the struggle for power, which Adamant won, held up the advance of

our cause for at least a year. You all know that. (*They nod*)
Well, next time, can't we manage things differently?

POLYGLOT What exactly is your proposition ?

SATURN This revolution of ours means everything to me. I sent for you men because of all those I know around the world I believe it means most to you too. I wanted you to know, no matter what happens, I have neither the desire, the hope, nor the intention of trying to succeed Adamant. I just don't want the job.

IRASCA Strangely enough I believe you. How many of the rest of us can say the same ?

SATURN (*After a pause*) I just thought if we could agree now, privately as friends, who should follow Adamant, it will help the cause immensely, and incidentally save us quite a bit of unpleasantness among ourselves.

BULLBLUFF There's sense in that. After all, we only want the best man for the job, don't we ?

POLYGLOT (*Somewhat cynically*) Do you have any ideas ? Who is the best man for the job ?

BULLBLUFF I believe in speaking my mind. I've often thought of this question of who will follow Adamant. Damn it! All of us have. You know it. It's the thing we think about most of the time but never dare to mention.

POLYGLOT We are certainly mentioning it now.

BULLBLUFF We need a man who has the common touch, who understands the broad heart of the people, a man who knows the masses because he is of the masses.

POLYGLOT Such a man as you, for instance, Bullbluff ?

BULLBLUFF You may sneer if you like, Polyglot. You blasted intellectuals always seem to have a superior grin up your sleeve no matter what you're saying. But after all—it's true. My grandfather was a miner. So was my father. And so was I. Down the pit at ten years old, day after day, half a mile down and a mile from the bottom of the pit to the coal face. Working there twelve hours a day in dark and damp on a seam sometimes only two feet thick. Not enough money at the end of the week to pay your bills for food. By God, it makes you bitter!

IRASCA I understand.

BULLBLUFF There was an explosion. I was one of the lucky ones. They dug me out after three days with both legs broken. Most of my pals were killed. Dad was just blown to pieces. It's something for a kid to remember, I can tell you.

DESSTANI What happened then ?

BULLBLUFF Work. What else could happen ? I had to keep my mother and three sisters. Work, work, work, till every muscle I had ached with it. And then one day something far worse than work. There was no work. The bosses said our pit didn't pay. We were left to starve. We scabbled coal out of the hillsides to keep us warm. We dug away the rocks and grew vegetables. We saw our wives grow thin, our children get bow-legged with rickets. I tell you, Polyglot, something was born deep down inside us then that fellows like you will never understand. But the masses of the world understand it, no matter what the colour of their skin. It's the driving power of revolution.

IRASCA I understand it. Its name is hate.

BULLBLUFF You get nowhere without hate. Hate has taken us where we are. It will take us to the end of the journey.

IRASCA I agree with you. A man who fails to hate the sort of thing you describe is not a man at all. But there's one thing you forget. Something which means you can never succeed Adamant. Never! Never! Never!

BULLBLUFF What's that ?

IRASCA You are British.

BULLBLUFF- (*Really angry*) What's wrong with that ?

IRASCA The masses of the world will never accept a British leader of world revolution.

BULLBLUFF What the hell do you mean, Irasca ? I hold no brief for Imperialism and exploitation. You know that. But, after all, the British have been around the world a long time. We've got to know it pretty well.

IRASCA (*Smiling and good-humoured*) And the world has got to know you British pretty well, too, Bullbluff—better than you think.

(*As Bullbluff is about to interrupt*)

IRASCA No, listen to me, my friend. We understand one another. We get on well. I can tell you the truth. You are like so many of your people—more British than revolutionary. You do not yet really grasp what others feel about you.

BULLBLUFF What do they feel ?

IRASCA My country is rich. Its veins run with gold and diamonds, tin and bauxite, copper and lead. The wild

things of the earth, elephant, deer, buffalo, rhinoceros, roam across its vastness. Our lakes and rivers teem with fish, our earth with food and fruit. The white people came to my country. They took our gold and wealth, our cattle and our land, our forests and our rivers. They used our strength and sweat to do it. They told us to look up to God, and while we were looking they stole our land. They became rich and left us poor. All this they did and all this we could have forgiven. But they did one thing more.

DESSANI Tell them what it is, Irasca. I understand but they don't.

IRASCA They robbed us of our manhood. It was not so much what they did as what they felt. Some of them treated us as an Englishman treats a horse or a dog, with kindly affection and the expectation of affection in return. They called it ingratitude when we began to hate. Even the best of them looked down upon us in their hearts as inferiors, as brutes. They were not always conscious of it. But we always were. We gave them service—they gave us the degradation of patronage and pity. They almost made us believe with their effortless superiority that we were less than men.

POLYGLOT So that, my poor Bullbluff, is why being British seems to bar you from hopes of becoming an acceptable leader of world revolution. Too bad!

DESSANI The British were in my country for nearly two hundred years. At last we got rid of them. But we somehow did not hate them as much as you would say they

deserved. Still, Irasca, I understand your feelings. I wonder if you will understand mine :

IRASCA What *do* you feel ?

DESSTANI Just this. Some Indians live in Africa, Irasca. Eight hundred thousand of us, to be exact. A lot of people. They have been treated in ways we do not like. We expect it from the Europeans. We did not expect it from your people.

POLYGLOT You see, my friend Irasca, however mistaken they may be, the Indians feel that some of your people treat them in much the same way as you feel the white man treated you. I'm afraid, Irasca, you will not find yourself acceptable as Adamant's successor in the Far East. Desstani here is far too polite to say so, but that's what you mean, isn't it, Desstani ?

DESSTANI Why should we accept any leader save one from the East? Nearly a quarter of the human race live in my country. We had an age-old civilisation before most nations were born. We have been nurtured through centuries. The next stage of history is ours. It belongs to us. We mean to keep it.

BULLBLUFF That's all very well, Desstani. You're a well-meaning chap. But our people would never go for an Easterner. They want a fellow with his feet on the ground.

POLYGLOT Our friend, Bullbluff, has had his feet on the ground so long, he's a little the worse for wear.

BULLBLUFF All right, Polyglot. You've got plenty to say about the rest of us. What about you ? Where do you come from anyway ?

POLYGLOT I come from every race and class and country. The blood of the East and West is mingled in me. My grandfather was a lord and my mother was a servant. I am a Jew and Gentile, white and black and yellow too. I am boss and worker. In fact, I have the essence of all humanity trickling about inside my carcass. As a matter of fact I actually possess eighteen passports from eighteen countries made out in eighteen different names.

BULLBLUFF Come off it, Polyglot. You always talk as if you were a bloody prima donna. It takes more than eighteen passports to run a world revolution.

POLYGLOT Exactly, Bullbluff. But the difference between you and me, however, is this. I know what it takes. You don't, and furthermore I also happen to have what it takes.

BULLBLUFF (*Furiously*) Implying that I haven't ?

(*Polyglot shrugs his shoulders*)

SATURN Tell me, Polyglot, what does it take to lead our cause ?

POLYGLOT It takes a knowledge of power and the ability to use it without fear or favour. Fear would distort your judgement, Saturn. You know that. You've admitted it. You don't want first place anyway. And favour would ruin the rest of you. Bullbluff, you'd favour the British. Irasca would be against the white. Desstani would be working for the East to control the world. But I, fortunately for us all, am free from favour and from fear. Also I know the use of power.

IRASCA What do you know of power that the rest of us don't ?

POLYGLOT Under Adamant and before him my task has been to encourage and exploit the moral weakness of the world. I can give you the names of homosexuals in every State Department among the nations. I can tell you those who womanise and drink and drug in the newspapers, the broadcasting corporations, the trade unions. I am in touch with the Cabinet Ministers who like to use their Cabinet secrets to enrich themselves and their friends. I suppose it's true to say that I have more power in my hands than any living man except Adamant himself.

SATURN I'd say this, Polyglot. You certainly have got results. It still amazes me when I see Governments who oppose us with their policy doing, just the same, things that suit us best—when I see newspapers attacking us in their editorials, but all the time carrying the news in a way we want in their columns.

POLYGLOT That's so—but that's nothing. The thing is you have got to know how to use power. Power is a strong drink. It gets you foolish and fuddled if you are not used to it. I am. Power doesn't throw me off balance. I am quite accustomed to the colossal effects of seemingly small decisions. Power suits me.

BULLBLUFF Too damned well, if you ask me.

IRASCA Do you dare to put that power of yours against the blood-bought devotion of millions of my people ?

DESSTANI How do we know that all this power you have accumulated will not be used for your own ends ?

BULLBLUFF By God, Polyglot! I wouldn't stand for you at any price.

(They are really angry and are glaring at Polyglot)

SATURN You see what I mean, gentlemen. It's not going to be easy.

(Red light and buzzer. Saturn clicks button and says)

Yes :

VOICE Is that Saturn, Chief of Police :

SATURN Go on.

VOICE Files you asked for to hand to Dr. Hippocrat are now ready, Excellency.

SATURN Just a minute. *(Clicks off talking box)* Before we continue this discussion, may I suggest we hear from Dr. Hippocrat the exact state of Adamant's health :

ALL Send him up. Agreed. Yes.

SATURN *(Clicks on talking box)* Saturn, Chief of Police here. Send up files for Dr. Hippocrat, immediately. Send up Dr. Hippocrat too.

VOICE Send files and Dr. Hippocrat immediately.

(Saturn clicks off box)

SATURN Dr. Hippocrat is thoroughly reliable. He is the best doctor in the country. At the same time I would suggest that nothing is said to him of the subject we have been discussing.

ALL Of course not! Do you think I'm a fool : *(From Bullbluff)*
etc.

(Sound of marching feet. Command "Escort halt!" Knock on door)

SATURN (*Who has arranged himself once more at desk*) Enter.

(*Enter guards with secretary carrying files followed by Dr. H.*)

SATURN (*Standing*) Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

ALL Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

SATURN (*To secretary*) The files. Get a receipt.

(*The secretary hands a receipt for the files to Dr. H. which Dr. H. signs. Saturn clicks talking box apparatus and as a light goes on says*)

SATURN I am ordering guards and secretary to withdraw. Dr. Hippocrat will remain here a few minutes. Mount guards on the door.

(*Guards withdraw and secretary*)

SATURN Dr. Hippocrat, will you please report to us on the exact state of Adamant's health ?

DR. H. (*Putting on his spectacles. Peering at a notebook he has taken from his pocket and reading his notes*) Certainly. Temperature normal. Blood pressure normal. Respiration normal. General health and strength excellent, remarkable, if I may be allowed to express my view, for a man of his age and activity.

IRASCA How long will he live ?

DR. H. May the Comrade of all the Peoples live for ever.

BULLBLUFF Come on, Doctor. Out with it!

DR. H. He may be good for many years yet.

POLYGLOT But he may go tonight, eh ?

DR. H. So could all of us. I shall be very surprised, gentle-

men, if Adamant is not spared to his peoples for many years yet.

POLYGLOT (*obviously disappointed*) Are you sure of that ?

DR. H. In my career as a doctor I have come to be sure of practically nothing . . .

SATURN Is that all you can tell us, Doctor ?

DR. H. That's all I can think of. (*Pause*) No, there is one other point I'd like to mention.

SATURN Speak out.

DR. H. It is a little awkward. You see it involves admitting that I have been doing something forbidden by the constitution.

SATURN (*Uneasy*) What is it ?

DR. H. I've been wondering about the future. " All speculation about the future leadership of the cause is forbidden under pain of imprisonment and interrogation." Article Fifty-nine, Subsection Sixteen of the Constitution. You of course remember ?

(All of them look at each other. Finally Polyglot breaks the silence)

POLYGLOT Certainly, I remember. I drafted that article myself. Why ?

DR. H. Being a doctor, accustomed to the normalcy of sickness and so on, makes you think about the possibilities of the future more than other men, I guess. Anyway, when I came in just now I couldn't help thinking that one of you might one day succeed Adamant, and wondering which it

would be. I'm sorry, gentlemen. I know it was wrong. It is unrevolutionary and bourgeois to indulge in such divisive speculations.

(After long pause)

SATURN Is that all ?

DR. H. Yes. One other point I would like to mention. I feel it is my duty now to tell you about Adamant's will.

SATURN Will ?

BULLBLUFF When did he make it ?

IRASCA Where is it ?

POLYGLOT What did it say ?

DR. H. It nominates his successor. It is in the safe of the Comrade of all the Peoples. He made it about two years ago.

SATURN How do you know what is in it ?

DR. H. Adamant told me to witness it. I and one other person.

BULLBLUFF Who does the will nominate ?

POLYGLOT *(Quickly)* Don't answer that. He mustn't answer that.

IRASCA Why not ?

DESTANI Yes. Why not ?

BULLBLUFF You're always interfering at the wrong time, Polyglot.

POLYGLOT It would be awkward, wouldn't it, if Adamant had nominated someone unsuitable—someone unacceptable, if you see what I mean ? *(He looks meaningfully at Bullbluff and Irasca)*

BULLBLUFF You're afraid he's not nominated *you*, damn you!

(*Turning to Dr. H.*) Who is the man named by Adamant ?

DR. H. I'm sorry. I'm afraid I can't tell you that. It would be directly contrary to Article Fifty-nine, Subsection Sixteen of the Constitution. You know that. It would cost me my life.

BULLBLUFF It may cost you your life if you don't.

SATURN Silence. There's another way. (*To Dr. H.*) You say there are two witnesses to the will. Who is the other witness ?

DR. H. I was hoping you might ask that question. The other witness is in your keeping. In fact he's in the Granite Prison. (*Pulls out his notebook and after consulting it says*) Prisoner Number 10352.

SATURN 10352 ? That must be the political section. What's he in for ? Do you know ?

DR. H. Yes. He was found guilty of political confusion and deviation. He was quite a close friend of mine. He came to the clinic with Adamant. He was his personal aide and agent. Few knew him well, but he was a great revolutionary.

POLYGLOT What happened ?

DR. H. It's nearly two years ago now. He was sent on a confidential mission to Poland, Germany, France and Switzerland. He was a few days in Geneva. From that moment his confidential dispatches ceased. About three weeks later he turned up. I had half an hour with him before he saw Adamant. Something had happened to him. Then Adamant sent for him. I have never seen him again.

IRASCA Send for him at once, Saturn.

DESSANI I agree.

BULLBLUFF We'll get him to speak all right. If he witnessed the will he'll tell us all we want to know.

POLYGLOT Certainly. If he's in gaol and been there for two years he'll be glad of the chance of breaking Article Fifty-nine, Subsection Sixteen. It might put him out of his misery.

SATURN All right. (*Clicks on talking box*) Send armed guard and armoured car at once to the Granite Prison. You will draft instructions to the Governor to hand over Prisoner Number—(*Clicks off machine and says to Dr. H.*) What number is he ?

DR. H. 10352.

SATURN (*Clicking on machine again*) Tell the Governor to hand over Prisoner Number 10352 to armed escort for interrogation. Bring prisoner here at once.

SATURN (*Switches off box*) He should be here in an hour.

DR. H. Do you want me to remain, Excellency ?

POLYGLOT Tell the Doctor to stay. If we can't get the truth from the prisoner we may have to ask him a few more questions.

SATURN You had better stay, Dr. Hippocrat.

DR. H. (*Composedly*) Delighted. I shall be glad to see my old friend Number 10352 again after two years. It will be interesting to see how prison suits him. He used to be a little on the fat side.

SATURN We'll have lunch if you all agree.

(Presses buzzer. Enter servant)

Serve lunch for six immediately. *(Servant goes)* Anyone want to wash ? *(He rises)*

SATURN Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

ALL THE REST Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

(Saturn goes out to wash his hands followed by Polyglot, Desstani and Irasca)

BULLBLUFF *(Pulls on his shoes. To Dr. H. as they follow behind)* You can say that again. Long live Adamant. You know, Doctor, I don't think there's much hope for the rest of us if Adamant dies and Polyglot gets the job.

DR. H. I rather think you're right, Mr. Bullbluff.

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

The scene is the same as Act I. As the curtain rises a servant carries in a tray with coffee and lays it on the table. He tidies the table, sets the chairs. He goes out. Enter Saturn, Irasca, Desstani, Polyglot, Bullbluff and Dr. Hippocrat. They have just finished lunch.

BULLBLUFF By God, you feed well here, Saturn!

POLYGLOT You've got to remember that any cooking seems good after British cooking, Bullbluff. (*Turning to Saturn*)
The peas were a trifle hard. Otherwise excellent.

DESSANI It was the best curry I've had since I left India ;
thank you, Saturn.

IRASCA We fed better than Prisoner 10352. I'm sure of that.
How long before he gets here ?

SATURN (*Looking at his watch*) He should come any minute now.

IRASCA I wonder what prison food is like nowadays ? I hope
they have given the poor devil something to eat before he
comes here.

SATURN We might offer him something, if you all agree.

BULLBLUFF Questions first, food second, if you ask me.

POLYGLOT I agree. But don't let's hurry him. He's an experi-
enced revolutionary, isn't he, Hippocrat ?

DR. H. He was closer to Adamant than almost anyone, before
he deviated.

POLYGLOT Then I propose we don't rush at him with our
question about Adamant's successor straight away. He'll be
on his guard at first. Ask him more general questions.

BULLBLUFF Give him a carrot before you hit him with the stick, eh ?

ALL Agreed.

DR. H. If I may say so, it is interesting how swiftly habits and customs change. I can remember a time when going to prison was a real bar to success in the world. It was a social disadvantage. Nowadays it's become almost a social necessity.

DESTANI It's a political necessity, too, in my part of the world. Almost all the rulers of my country were in gaol under the British. If you haven't been much in gaol, you haven't much chance of a political career nowadays, since the British have left us.

IRASCA Prison, taken in the right spirit, can be the greatest university in the world.

SATURN Let's hope Number 10352 is taking it in the right spirit.

(Red light goes on. Saturn clicks button and says) Yes ?

VOICE Is that Saturn, Chief of Police ?

SATURN What is it ?

VOICE Prisoner Number 10352 arrived with escort from Granite Prison.

SATURN Have they been searched for weapons according to regulations ?

VOICE Searched as usual, Excellency. Nothing found on prisoner. Escort armed in accordance with regulations.

SATURN Send them up immediately.

VOICE Send prisoner and escort up immediately.

(Saturn clicks off talking box)

SATURN Let us arrange ourselves.

(They quickly sit and form an impressive pose as the click of guards is heard outside the door. "Escort, halt!" A knock on the door)

SATURN Yes :

(Enter prisoner and escort. The prisoner is handcuffed to his escort. He has the prison pallor on him, but apart from that is composed, almost debonair. He is far more sure of himself than any of the rest throughout this act)

SATURN *(Rising)* Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

DR. H.

IRASCA

DESTANI

POLYGLOT

BULLBLUFF

} Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

PRISONER Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

BULLBLUFF You've certainly got a nerve.

PRISONER I'm sorry. You see I really do want him to live. I like him. And anyway, I wouldn't want anything to happen to my old friend, Dr. Hippocrat.

POLYGLOT What do you mean by that ?

PRISONER Only that doctors do not usually survive dictators long.

DR. H. *(Hurriedly coming forward)* My dear fellow, I really am delighted to see you again. You've lost weight.

PRISONER (*As they shake hands*) Please excuse the handcuffs.

Yes. His Excellency Mr. Saturn's hospitality at the Granite Prison is good for you. I was far too fat before.

BULLBLUFF (*To Irasca*) Damn his hide! But I like his spirit.

SATURN (*Clicking on the box*) Mount guards on the doors. I am sending down the prisoner's escort. Prisoner will remain here for interrogation.

VOICE Mount guard. Prisoner's escort coming down. Prisoner to stay for interrogation.

(*Saturn clicks off machine. Saturn motions to escort who unhandcuffs the prisoner, turns and leaves*)

SATURN (*To prisoner*) We want to ask you some questions.

Why are you in prison ?

PRISONER Excellency, that is a question I would much like to ask you. I was accused of being a deviationist and politically confused. I was accused of being a traitor.

IRASCA What made you a traitor ?

PRISONER I am no traitor—seriously, gentlemen, if these were my last words on earth—and for all I know they may be—I have never in my life felt more certain of the need of revolution on a global scale.

SATURN Sit down. Are you daring to suggest that there has been injustice ?

PRISONER Not at all! I'd have done exactly the same as Adamant if I'd been in his shoes. I really gave him no choice. He had to put me in gaol.

POLYGLOT Why ?

PRISONER I'll tell you the story. You see, I am an old comrade of Adamant. You remember the famine riots in 1928, just before the final overthrow of the old order ? We marched arm in arm breast forward towards the royal palace. The royal guards fired. Ninety-six men were killed. Eleven of us were sent to gaol for life for inciting the riot. Adamant was one of the eleven. I was another.

SATURN Were you in that ? I was there among the crowd.

POLYGLOT So was I.

DESSANI I didn't realise you'd been in gaol before.

PRISONER Of course I have. This is my sixth prison sentence. They put me in gaol in the old régime and they put me in gaol now. I'm just too revolutionary to be allowed loose, I suppose.

SATURN Get on with your story.

PRISONER Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, knew I was politically reliable. He trusted me with many of his personal and private missions. Just over two years ago, he sent me into Poland, France, Germany and finally to Switzerland. I had to give instructions for him to some of our people in the secretariat of the ILO. I gave the instructions. It only took a day or two. But all the time my mind was full of something else.

IRASCA What was that ?

PRISONER A few days before he sent me on this mission, Adamant had made a will and asked me and Dr. Hippocrat here to witness it.

D

BULLBLUFF Ah, that's what we want to get at!

POLYGLOT What did the will say ?

PRISONER It nominated Adamant's successor. (*As they all lean forward eagerly*) Oh, I know I shouldn't talk like this. If I were anything except a prisoner I wouldn't. But knowing that Adamant had nominated a successor I started to think. I guessed he might be ill. I remember what happened last time a dictator died in our country. I was wondering all the time I was in Geneva whether I should come back here at all. Naturally, I had no claim to succeed Adamant. But I'd been close to him. It's a dangerous thing to be close to a dictator when he is a dead one.

SATURN Just tell us what happened. And tell us quickly.

PRISONER I heard at Geneva that a number of the delegates were going to some revolutionary training centre. I thought it my duty to go and investigate. So I went with the others. I found there a revolutionary concept that went far beyond our own.

IRASCA Beyond ?

DESSTANI I do not understand.

BULLBLUFF It's a pack of nonsense. Nobody could go beyond fellows like us. Could they, Polyglot ?

POLYGLOT There are one or two things beyond *you*, Bullbluff, if I may say so. (*To prisoner*) What concept did you find there ?

PRISONER Philosophers explain the world. Our job is to change it.

SATURN We all agree on that.

PRISONER I found people who are changing the world. There were people there of every race, class and nation. They were living a true international, and living it in a way that we have never fully reached. They weren't suspicious of each other. They seemed determined to revolutionise the world economically, socially, politically. But they said that this concept by itself did not go far enough. They were out for a change in human nature.

SATURN Human nature can never change until economic conditions change.

PRISONER It can. Really it can. You see it happened to me.

POLYGLOT What do you mean—happened to you? A master of dialectic materialism would never fall for stuff like that. It's not radical.

PRISONER A radical deals with the root. The root is human nature. It took me seven years of my life to master scientific dialectic materialism. It took less than seven days for these ideas to master me. That is the difference.

SATURN What happened?

PRISONER They said that nobody is more reactionary than the person who wants to see the world different but is unwilling to be different himself. I'd never thought of that before. But of course it's true.

BULLBLUFF Go on.

PRISONER I thought liquidation and purges were modern development. Then I saw they were a return to the feudalism of the Middle Ages. Even to the jungle.

D*

SATURN We know how to deal with enemies of the people.

PRISONER They said, "History shows that whoever uses hate to win power always has to use fear to keep it." I knew that was true. I knew that men like myself who had hated for years were now afraid—afraid of what would happen to us if Adamant died. (*All the others glance restlessly at each other*) As a matter of fact, I don't think I'd ever have come back here at all, if I hadn't lost fear.

BULLBLUFF How did you lose it ?

PRISONER I started with absolute honesty. I was afraid of Adamant and men like you finding out what I was thinking. But I was also scared of my wife finding out the sort of things I had been doing when I went on missions to conferences like Geneva. I told her the truth. And at that moment I lost fear of being found out.

POLYGLOT This is small talk.

PRISONER Maybe it is. You see, for years my problem was big talk. I always talked bigger than I lived. I used to make speeches against exploitation. I hated it. I used to work myself up into a frenzy about it. Then I realised that when I took my wife or another woman for my pleasure, I exploited her as cruelly and selfishly as any capitalist exploits any worker. I used to write articles against Imperialism. I found I was an Imperialist in my own home and in the office. I used to expect obedience to my will, service to my fancy and gratitude to myself as a right from all I had dealings with. I was an Imperialist whenever I wanted to force my will on another person. And I did it most of the time.

IRASCA Imperialism does more than that. Imperialism is the thing that robs others of their manhood and turns them into beasts.

PRISONER That's true. And I'm glad of this break from prison. It gives me the chance to make the apology I owe to you and your people. (*Turning to Desstani*) And to yours too.

DESSANI What have you done to our people ?

PRISONER I used to praise and flatter the Africans and Indians and the other nations of the East. When they came to our capital I would give them banquets, provide for their creature comforts. In cities like Geneva I would seek them out and play up to them. I wanted to use the masses of Asia and Africa for our revolution. But I always thought of it as *our* revolution. I never considered letting the final control of it out of our hands for a moment. Until I changed I never looked on you and your people as equal revolutionaries or equal men. I'm really ashamed of it, and I'm really sorry.

DESSANI Nobody has ever said anything like that to me before.

IRASCA We have always felt it. This is an honest man. We seem to put the honest men in gaol. (*As all look startled*) Don't worry, remember most of us have been there.

BULLBLUFF That's true, Irasca. But I can't pretend I went there because of my honesty.

POLYGLOT Honest he may be. Dangerous he certainly is. Prison's the proper place for a man like that. Adamant did

well to send him there. (*To prisoner*) How did Adamant discover the way you were thinking and feeling ?

PRISONER I told him. I told him everything.

SATURN Everything ?

PRISONER Yes, I told him how witnessing his will had made me fear for my life. How I thought of never returning to this country. I told him about absolute moral standards.

POLYGLOT Did he laugh ?

PRISONER He did at first. He's like so many people you know. He's apt to laugh at anything which makes him feel uncomfortable or which he does not fully understand. But then I told him of my fears for the future of our own revolution unless people like us changed.

SATURN I don't understand you. What do you mean ?

PRISONER Adamant agreed that unless we could answer the jealousy and rivalry between men like us, we would precipitate the class struggle inside our own ranks. You see, he often worries about you fellows. He knows you pretty well.

BULLBLUFF If Adamant questions *my* loyalty . . .

PRISONER Not your loyalty. But things like conceit, vanity, jealousy, the little things that can so easily trip up the most experienced revolutionary.

POLYGLOT Look here, Saturn, stop all this. Who is investigating who ?

SATURN (*To prisoner*) What did you tell Adamant ?

PRISONER I told him that our ambitions, feuds and intrigues

produced contradictions inside our own revolution which were the germs of our own destruction. I told him that the theory of the class struggle, carried to its logical conclusion, must result in atomic war between two power groups—a war that will certainly destroy the world as we know it. I told him that a synthesis must be found.

POLYGLOT I would have had you shot on the spot.

IRASCA What did Adamant say ?

PRISONER If you must know, he agreed with every word of it.

SATURN Agreed ?

POLYGLOT You're lying.

PRISONER No, I'm not. He knew I had changed, and he said that a change of human nature on a colossal scale, starting with ourselves, was the factor needed in our revolution. He went so far as to say that without that change we could never achieve our full revolutionary purpose.

POLYGLOT You *are* lying. If Adamant agrees, why did he put you in gaol ?

PRISONER He said it was the only safe place for me at this stage of the game. You see, Adamant's a friend of mine. He didn't want anything drastic to happen to me. He thought that if I went on talking like this, someone like you would kill me. He's been in prison himself. He said it's the only place in the last thirty years where he's had the leisure to think. He told me it was the best he could do for me. So I went to gaol.

SATURN There's something in what this man says. We must see Adamant and discuss this whole matter with him.

POLYGLOT There's nothing in what the man says. But we certainly must see Adamant.

DESSANI There is real truth in the prisoner.

BULLBLUFF I like him. But then I like all prisoners on principle. I always feel at home with crooks, (*Looking at Polyglot*) at least with *some* crooks.

SATURN Are we all agreed then that we must see Adamant immediately ?

ALL Agreed.

DR. H. Just a moment. I'm afraid it's quite out of the question. Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, would never hear of it. The state of his health completely forbids it.

SATURN No matter what his health is like we must see him now. We must find out what he feels about all this.

DR. H. Impossible.

BULLBLUFF What the hell do you mean, impossible ?

SATURN Dr. Hippocrat, this is not a request. It is an order.

DR. H. I began to feel the sense of an order in the way you are talking at me. Just the same it's an order which, regretfully, I am unable to obey.

SATURN This is open rebellion against the State.

DR. H. Nonsense! Nothing of the kind. It's plain common sense. I tell you it's impossible to see Adamant. It's impossible for anyone else to see him for that matter. He's far worse than you think. Actually the man's dead.

SATURN Dead ?

BULLBLUFF Damnation !

DR. H. Possibly damnation too, though I don't think so.

Adamant changed a good deal before he went.

POLYGLOT What the hell are you talking about ?

SATURN Why didn't you report the death of Adamant,

Comrade of all the Peoples, this morning ?

DR. H. Well, there's nothing new in it. He's been dead for quite some time now. Several months, to be exact.

IRASCA This man is mad.

DR. H. There's no need for anybody to get excited. It is all quite simple.

BULLBLUFF Quite simple ? I don't understand a thing.

POLYGLOT There's nothing new in that, Bullbluff.

SATURN Tell us what happened.

DR. H. I'm trying to. But you all get so excited it's hard to make you understand. You see, Adamant fell ill. His disease *was* deadly. It *was* contagious. I became his only link with the world. And I did my very best to keep him living. I knew my own life depended on it. Also I thought—and Adamant agreed with me—that the progress of the revolution depended on it too.

POLYGLOT What do you mean by that ?

DR. H. Adamant was a real revolutionary. He was ready to learn new things all the time. In his will he did something quite new, something that has never been done before or since the great revolution.

POLYGLOT Yes, come on. What about the will ? Who did he nominate to succeed him ?

PRISONER He nominated you, Bullbluff.

BULLBLUFF Ah !

IRASCA Never, never, never!

PRISONER And he nominated you too, Polyglot.

BULLBLUFF *And* Polyglot?

SATURN Are you sure Adamant did not say *or* Polyglot ?

PRISONER He said *and*. And you too, Saturn, and Desstani and Irasca.

DESTANI All of us ?

IRASCA You mean we'd be expected to run the revolution together ?

PRISONER Exactly.

DESTANI As equals ?

PRISONER Precisely.

(Pause)

DR. H. I may be doing you an injustice. But I felt, gentlemen, some of you would find such an arrangement intolerable. I felt that as soon as Adamant went, you would start fighting each other for power. We'd have another long spell of purge and liquidation. I really didn't want that. I didn't see it would do much good to the cause we all believe in. Adamant agreed.

POLYGLOT Adamant ? I like that. He won power himself by force. He liquidated all his competitors.

SATURN Be careful, Polyglot, we have put thousands in gaol for statements less subversive than that.

BULLBLUFF That's right. You watch your step, Polyglot.

POLYGLOT What I say is true.

IRASCA Truth is no defence in this revolution. It only makes things worse.

DESTANI (*To Dr. H.*) When exactly did he die ?

DR. H. (*Pulling out his notebook*) Let me see. Eleven months, three weeks, two days ago precisely.

SATURN What did you do ?

DR. H. Buried him.

BULLBLUFF But all this is nonsense. It must be nonsense. I don't understand it.

POLYGLOT The fact that you don't understand something, Bullbluff, does not prove conclusively that it is nonsense.

BULLBLUFF Stop your damned sneering. The point is—if Adamant died nearly a year ago, who has been running the revolution since ?

DR. H. It's a difficult point for me to mention, gentlemen. But I suppose you might say, I have. It's really been a most interesting experience. Each day I have come to see Saturn here. He has given me secret reports for Adamant and recommendations for the different departments of State. I've spent the rest of the day reading them. If any decision has been needed, I've done the best I can, in Adamant's name. But it really has surprised me how few decisions you really have to make.

IRASCA What about foreign affairs ?

DR. H. That's been the easiest of the lot. We've had an average of a note a month from one or other of the Imperialist powers. I've read them, but haven't known what

to say, so I've said nothing. After a few days the Imperialist powers always start disagreeing with each other on their interpretation of Adamant's silence. They debate in Parliament, Congress or the House of the People. They adopt different lines of policy to meet their own interpretation of the situation. Then another note arrives.

POLYGLOT We've had enough of this. (*Turning to Saturn*) This man (*Pointing to Dr. H.*) admits concealing the death of Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, for over eleven months. For all we know he may have killed him deliberately.

DR. H. I assure you I didn't. He had the very best of care. His treatments cost me a fortune. Naturally, for the sake of secrecy I've not been able to send the State the bill — yet.

POLYGLOT Silence! (*To Saturn*) This man may have killed Adamant. Certainly he has been guilty of treasonable activity and interference in the government of the State. I call on you to take instant action.

SATURN What action ?

POLYGLOT Arrest him immediately. Have him shot this afternoon.

BULLBLUFF Damn it, Polyglot! give the man a trial first.

POLYGLOT Plenty of time for a trial between now and three p.m.

IRASCA I don't think we can risk a trial. If these facts come out the world would laugh at us.

DESTANI That is true. We can afford anything except laughter.

PRISONER You don't need a trial. At least Adamant never gave me one. But I have a sort of feeling that shooting Dr. Hippocrat may not be the best way to help the revolution forward.

POLYGLOT You keep your nose out of this. The fact that you were here at this time has finished you anyway.

PRISONER Maybe. I don't think so.

SATURN Aren't you afraid of us ?

PRISONER Do you want to be the sort of men I am afraid of ?

POLYGLOT Yes we do.

BULLBLUFF No, damn it, *I* don't!

DESSTANI Nor do I.

SATURN Why do you think we cannot do as Polyglot suggests, Prisoner ?

PRISONER Ask Dr. Hippocrat. If he's the man I think he is, he'll be able to tell you. He's spent his life trying to keep other people alive and he won't have neglected his own health, I'll bet. You won't be able to shoot him.

DR. H. I rather think Prisoner Number 10352 is right. Of course you can arrest and shoot me if you like, Saturn. It's up to you. I brought you into the world. You can send me out of it. But there'll be quite a number of consequences.

IRASCA What consequences ?

DR. H. I took precautions.

BULLBLUFF What the hell do you mean ?

DR. H. I knew the showdown would have to come sometime. For several months now I have been asking in Adamant's name for the secret files concerning people like

yourselves. I know everything about all of you. I copied every detail.

POLYGLOT Every detail? Where are the copies of the files?

DR. H. I sent them to a friend of mine, a lawyer in another country. He is in touch with the newspapers of the world. I also wrote an account of all that has happened, including Adamant's death and the way I have been handling things here. I have instructed my friend that in the event of any sudden mishap or disappearance on my part, he is to take the story and the files, including those concerning you men, and publish them to the press of the world.

BULLBLUFF By God, that's smart!

DESSTANI He's got us.

POLYGLOT He's nothing but a traitor. Shoot him, I say, shoot him now!

DESSTANI Shooting him will not help him, nor will it help us.

IRASCA We dare not risk the laughter of the world.

SATURN Why did you tell us about the will and get the prisoner here?

DR. H. I knew the game would be up sooner or later. When you told me you had sent for these others from all over the world, that the very men nominated in Adamant's will were going to be together in your place today, it seemed too good a chance to miss. And I wanted you to hear what the prisoner had to say. I honestly felt he had something that might secure the future for us.

SATURN The future is ours. You know that. The success of our revolution is inevitable.

PRISONER That is true; if things go on as they are, we shall gain control of the world. But the world will not change.

BULLBLUFF Of course it will change. Our lot will be far better off.

DESSTANI What about our lot ?

IRASCA And ours ?

POLYGLOT You're hopeless, Bullbluff. You understand so little.

BULLBLUFF I understand you, Polyglot. I've got your number, damn you!

PRISONER If we can't answer the hate and fear and greed in ourselves, how can we answer it in the world ? No, we must find a new element in our revolution. We can learn not to talk about peace, but to live it for all men. Not to talk about brotherhood and love, but to live them for every class and nation. That is the synthesis of our age. We have got to live what we want the world to live.

DESSTANI That is truth.

IRASCA The truth is not always convenient. I do not want to lose my hate. I should not know what to do.

BULLBLUFF I don't know. You'd be better without it, man. There's something to be said for it. You know, Polyglot, it will mean a hell of a lot of change for you.

POLYGLOT Bullbluff, don't be so reactionary. That's not the new spirit of the revolution. If you want to see the world different the most practical place to start with is—yourself. (*Thoughtfully*) Amazing how quickly a really intelligent man can pick up the essence of the new dialectic.

SATURN It's fine to start with yourself. But I'd like to see the heads of the Imperialistic powers do a bit of changing.

DR. H. Why not? We may bring a secret into statesmanship that is the key to a new age. Our Cabinet can be the first to master the art of changing the other fellow, of making enemies into friends.

SATURN (*Red light flashes. Saturn clicks talking box and says*) Yes?

VOICE Important dispatch just arrived for Foreign Ministry. Request that Dr. Hippocrat shall take it to Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples, immediately.

SATURN Send it up now. (*Clicks off light*) I wonder what in the world this is? We've got enough on our hands already. Thank goodness Adamant will have to deal with it. (*Looks around the room*) No, I quite forgot. He's dead. We'll have to handle this ourselves.

(*Steps outside, "Escort halt!" Knock on door*)

SATURN Yes?

(*Enter messenger bearing dispatch*)

MESSENGER Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

(*Silence. All the men look at each other*)

MESSENGER (*Far more loudly*) Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

ALL (*Doubtfully*) Long live Adamant, Comrade of all the Peoples.

SATURN (*Taking dispatch*) You may go.

(*Messenger goes*)

BULLBLUFF I'm afraid he thought we weren't quite as enthusiastic about poor old Adamant as we should have been.

POLYGLOT What's in the dispatch ?

SATURN (*To Dr. H.*) You open it. After all, you've been doing this sort of thing for a long time.

DR. H. Certainly. (*Putting on his spectacles and peering at the dispatch*) It's a request from America, France and Italy for a meeting of the Big Six Powers. An immediate answer is requested.

POLYGLOT It's a trap. Say no.

BULLBLUFF It's a chance. Say yes.

IRASCA It's a trick. Say nothing. That is your policy, isn't it, Doctor ?

DR. H. It has been my policy. But I have an idea we can offer something really new to the world this time. It may be a real chance to change these presidents and premiers.

SATURN How ?

PRISONER If I may put in another word—the problem those men suffer from is wanting too much of their own way.

BULLBLUFF That's exactly it.

POLYGLOT But they always say we want too much of our way.

BULLBLUFF In your case, Polyglot, that's dead right.

SATURN Oh, stop it, Bullbluff! The prisoner's no fool, you know. He's talked a lot of sense. How *can* we get these men to agree with us if we can't even agree with each other ?

PRISONER That's it. Now I believe we could go to a Big Six Conference with something that would really take them by surprise.

DESTANI What would that be ?

PRISONER I've been thinking about it a lot in prison. We've learned how to break a man's will and leave him like a jelly in a vacuum. We've never learned to replace it with a superior will—the will for what is right. If we take this secret to the conference table it will revolutionise the situation in the world.

BULLBLUFF The thing is—how to get it into practical terms so it won't look like weakness.

DR. H. Suppose for once we could leave behind our desire to get them to see how right we are ?

DESSTANI Yes, what if we united with them to find what is right, not who is right, on every issue ?

IRASCA Supposing we told them we wanted their help in solving every problem in the world?

DR. H. We could tell them we are not always right.

BULLBLUFF You mean then they might agree that they are not always right ?

POLYGLOT They might not.

IRASCA It's worth trying.

POLYGLOT Sounds like mysticism to me.

PRISONER You will find it's practical. It's universal. And it's the greatest revolution ever.

SATURN Comrades, I suggest we try this new approach. Do you agree ?

IRASCA Agreed.

DESSTANI I think it's right.

POLYGLOT You can't lose anything.

BULLBLUFF All right, I'll go along.

SATURN (*Clicking on talking box. Light flashes*) Tell Foreign Office to accept Big Six Conference.

VOICE Foreign Office to accept Big Six Conference.

SATURN Now we've agreed—what do we do? (*Switches off*)

PRISONER Well, in my case it started with absolute honesty.

BULLBLUFF (*As all begin to take their seats around the prisoner*) I don't like the sound of that.

POLYGLOT Neither do I.

SATURN You know this thing really works. That's the first time I've heard you two here agree on anything.

(*Saturn stands up and begins to walk up and down restlessly. The eyes of all the men follow him to and fro*)

DR. H. Anything on your mind, Saturn?

SATURN Well, in a new and revolutionary spirit of absolute honesty, yes. There is.

DR. H. Come on. Can't you tell us what it is?

SATURN I suspected all the time that something was seriously wrong with Adamant. I knew you were playing some game, Dr. Hippocrat, but I couldn't make out what it was. I decided to move first. I wanted to use the situation for my own advantage. The fact is that I called this meeting here today with only one object in mind.

DESSANI What was that?

SATURN To secure my own nomination as Adamant's successor. To find out which of you would support my claim. To deal with those who would not. I was out to cheat you all. Comrades, I'm sorry.

BULLBLUFF Well, I'll be damned!

POLYGLOT I suspected you all along.

IRASCA I was afraid of you. But I'm afraid no more. Thank you, Saturn.

DESSTANI (*To the others*) On this basis we of the East can trust our comrade. I propose we delegate Saturn as our representative at the Big Six Conference.

BULLBLUFF } (*Together*) Agreed.
POLYGOT }

SATURN Very well. I'll do my best. But in order to do it I want all of you to come with me. I can't work alone any more. I'll need your help.

DR. H. Thank Heaven I don't have to go too. It'll be such a relief to get back to looking after people again.

SATURN Looking after people. That's it. If we can start to put people first instead of our pride, our prejudice, our plan, our political ambition.

DR. H. You'll do it, Saturn. When men like you change, the whole world can change.

SATURN What about men like you, Hippocrat ?

DR. H. (*Uneasily*) Men like me don't really matter.

SATURN It's for men like me and men like you, too, Doctor. It's a universal need and a universal answer. It's for all men, everywhere. It's the greatest revolution of all time. That's right, isn't it, Prisoner ?

(*They all look at the prisoner and he is nodding at Saturn as the curtain slowly falls*)

CURTAIN